

Stages of Marriage

Objective: Just and each person grows and evolves, so does the “life” of a marriage goes through stages. In general terms these stages are: 1) Romance, Passion, Expansion and Promise, 2) Settling down and Realization, 3) Rebellion and Power Struggles, and 4) Discovery, Reconciliation, and Beginning Again. A couple may move in and out and around these stages over the entire course of their marriage. Someone once said, ““I’ve been married six times – all to the same woman.” Life events are often a catalyst for these “recycles” – birth of children, parenting challenges, empty nest, retirement, taking care of aging parents, etc. Sometimes, the stress within these cycles requires outside help – counseling, Retrouvaille, etc. The most important thing is to keep God at the center of your marriage. This means being alert to the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit. Contemporary culture wants answers and certainty; faith requires trust and surrender. God gives us enough clarity to take the next few steps, even if we cannot see the entire road and where it will end. Where are you in your marriage?

Song Suggestion: Love Divine, All Loves Excelling (Blue 288, Red 613, Music Issue 468)

Bible and Catechism Readings:

Mk 10:6-9

But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate.”

Romans 12:9-10

Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good. Love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor.

1 Cor 13:4-7

Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Catechism 1648

It can seem difficult, even impossible, to bind oneself for life to another human being. This makes it all the more important to proclaim the Good News that God loves us with a definitive and irrevocable love, that married couples share in this love, that it supports and sustains them, and that by their own faithfulness they can be witnesses to God's faithful love. Spouses who with God's grace give this witness, often in very difficult conditions, deserve the gratitude and support of the ecclesial community.

Catechism 372

Man and woman were made "for each other" - not that God left them half-made and incomplete: he created them to be a communion of persons, in which each can be "helpmate" to the other, for they are equal as persons ("bone of my bones. . .") and complementary as masculine and feminine.

Saint: Saint Priscilla and Saint Aquilla

This couple assisted Saint Paul in his missionary work in Corinth, Ephesus and Rome and he called them his

“coworkers in Christ Jesus.” They were instrumental in teaching the evangelist Apollos more about Christ. They are usually mentioned together, never separately. This reveals the unity lived out in their marriage. Their feast day is July 8 and they are the patron saint of married couples.

Vignette: – “Happy marriage is like building a beautiful building – – together. 50 years ago I embarked on that “building project”. Thanks be to God the “building” is still standing and thriving. But 50 years ago, I had little idea about how to create a beautiful building. I had no idea how difficult, challenging and painful at times it would be. Call me “clueless”. I had fallen in love with my wife and thought that was all there was to happiness. It is a common theme in our society. We often mistake the part for the whole, by believing that romantic love is the only kind of love that really counts.

I eventually realized that romantic love, glorious as it is (believe me I’m a big fan!), is not and cannot be constant. At times, life, including married life, is not pleasant. If I’m going to stay happily married I need to develop the other forms of love that go beyond romantic love: friendship, love of family, and sacrificial love. “

To read the whole story, see:

<https://www.holyfamilycounselingcenter.com/working-toward-a-happy-catholic-marriage/>

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

Look at the stages of marriage described in the resources – where are you and your spouse?

Have you “recycled” through a stage of marriage? What was it like?

What are the biggest challenges in your marriage today? How are you dealing with them?

How good are you at loving your wife the way she deserves to be loved? How can you do better?

Resources:

Stages of marriage:

<https://www.foryourmarriage.org/stages-of-growth-in-marriage/>

Keys to a successful marriage:

<https://catholicstewardship.com/eleven-keys-to-a-successful-marriage/>

Action Plan:

Spend time in personal prayer and reflection on this.

Spend some time talking with your wife on this topic.

Agree on what actions you will take to improve where you are.

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