

Strengthening Our Marriages: A Catholic Father's Calling

Headline: Marriage is a sacred covenant, vocation and path to holiness, lived through daily acts of love and self-giving service. As Catholic husbands, we are called not only to love our wives, but to help them, and ourselves, grow in holiness through humble, sacrificial service modeled after Christ. Through the Catholic vision of sacrificial love and spiritual leadership, we can discover simple, meaningful ways to serve our wives and grow together in holiness.

Objective: To help fathers deepen their understanding of marriage as a sacrament, reflect on our role as husbands, and commit to concrete action that strengthens their relationship with their spouse through holiness and service.

Song Suggestion: We Are Many Parts (Marty Haugen)

Bible and Catechism Readings:

Ephesians 4:1-3

Live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace:

Ephesians 5:25-27

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.

1 Thes 5:11

Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, as indeed you do.

1 Corinthians 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 1605

Holy Scripture affirms that man and woman were created for one another: "It is not good that the man should be alone." The woman, "flesh of his flesh," his equal, his nearest in all things, is given to him by God as a "helpmate"; she thus represents God from whom comes our help. "Therefore, a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." The Lord himself shows that this signifies an unbreakable union of their two lives by recalling what the plan of the Creator had been "in the beginning": "So they are no longer two, but one flesh."

Saint:

Saint Joseph is a model of faithful, quiet strength, sacrificial love, and servant leadership within the Holy Family. St. Joseph led not with words, but with action, protecting, providing, and remaining obedient to God. His example reminds us that holiness in marriage is often lived through hidden acts of service, fidelity, and trust.

Vignette:

(From the wise perspective of our spouse):

When my husband and I almost fell apart, there weren't any loud fights. No cheating. No screaming. Just a quiet, slow drifting we didn't mean to let happen. It showed up in the everyday things, where we slowly stopped reaching for each other. It happened quietly, softly, and in the space between the dishwasher and bedtime. In the silence between "Can you grab milk tomorrow?" and "Did you switch the laundry?" One day, we were flirting

in the hallway. The next, we were just, well, passing by each other. Still loving each other, still committed, but no longer reaching for each other. That's the part no one talks about. Not the drama, but the silent drift. The season where love becomes routine. Where you're no longer holding each other, and somewhere along the way, you start feeling more like roommates than soulmates. A couple of years ago, that's where we were.

One night, after weeks of us simply existing together, when my husband asked me if something was wrong, I told him the truth. "I miss us." I said. I didn't say it to hurt him. I didn't want flowers. I didn't want fancy date nights. I just missed the little things. I missed feeling close to him. I missed us reaching for one another. The way he used to touch the small of my back when I cooked. The kisses for no reason. The soft, quiet moments that used to say, "I still see you."

After we talked, we climbed into bed. No more words. Just silence, and his hand reaching for mine. The next morning, I got up and started my morning routine to make our kids breakfast. As I stood at the stove, making some eggs, he came up behind me, he wrapped his arms around me, kissed my cheek, and whispered, "I missed us, too. We're still here." In that moment, just like that, something changed. The spark didn't come back with a grand gesture. It didn't come back during a fancy date night. It came back in the kitchen, while I held a dish towel. With a tired man I've loved for years reminding me, we're still in this. We weren't broken. We were just distracted. Tired, busy, and normal. That moment reminded me of something I'll never forget. **The spark doesn't die in one big moment. It fades in a hundred little ones**, and if you're not careful, you'll start to believe that distance means your love is gone, but it isn't.

I have come to learn that **love doesn't just vanish.....It waits. It waits to be noticed, to be chosen again, to be reached for in the quiet, and simple, moments.** Sometimes, all it takes to bring it back is one soft kiss in the kitchen, a hand placed gently on your back, and two people who still believe it's worth the reach.

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

1. What does it mean to love my wife in a way that helps her grow in holiness?
2. Where is God calling me to serve more selflessly and/or more intentionally in my marriage?
3. In what ways do I currently serve my wife well?
4. Where is it hardest for me to choose service over self?

Resources:

1. Over 20 Practical Ways to Love your Wife and Renew Your Marriage
<https://catholic-link.org/love-your-wife-catholic/>
2. 8 Things Catholics Can Do For Their Spouses Every Day
<https://catholic-link.org/catholic-spouse-marriage-tips/>
3. 7 Ways to Strengthen Your Marriage (attached)

Action Plan:

Choose one or more concrete acts of self-giving service or sacrificial love (or come up with your own) to help strengthen your marriage and help it to grow in holiness.

1. Pray with or for your wife daily
2. Take initiative in something that lightens her burden
3. Offer patience in a moment of tension
4. Perform a hidden act of love without recognition
5. Other acts of self-giving service and sacrificial love

- I. _____
- II. _____
- III. _____

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7 Ways to Strengthen Your Marriage!

Simple steps to build a happy, fulfilling relationship – starting with you.

If you're married, your relationship is one of the most significant aspects of your life. A thriving marriage often reflects a fulfilling life, while struggles in your relationship can affect your overall happiness. The key to a strong marriage? Becoming a better spouse yourself. Rather than waiting for your partner to change, take the initiative. Lead by example, showing commitment, effort, and love. Below are seven practical ways to enhance your marriage and become a more loving spouse.

1. Be interested in your partner's world

Just like you, your spouse has hopes, dreams, and challenges. A deep connection comes from consistently showing curiosity about their passions, fears, and experiences. The more you seek to understand them, the deeper your emotional bond will grow.

2. Prioritize fun together

Shared activities are the foundation of strong friendships, and marriage should be no different. Over time, obligations can push fun to the side, but couples who regularly engage in enjoyable activities together- whether a hobby, a sport, or spontaneous adventures- foster deeper connection and joy.

3. Align your goals and interests

Couples who pursue common aspirations often feel more connected. Whether it's a shared fitness routine, financial goal, or a passion project, working towards something together, strengthens your bond and gives your relationship new energy.

4. Show affection regularly

Affection isn't just about grand romantic gestures- it's built through small, daily acts of kindness. A gentle touch, a warm smile, or a thoughtful note can reinforce love and security in your marriage. Make affection a habit, both physically and emotionally.

5. Speak encouraging words

As familiarity grows, it's easier to take each other for granted. However, verbal appreciation can go a long way in making your partner feel valued. Compliment their strengths, acknowledge their efforts, and express gratitude for the little things they do.

6. Lighten the mood

A successful marriage thrives on laughter and playfulness. Life comes with responsibilities, but maintaining a sense of humor and finding joy in everyday moments can make your bond even stronger. Small acts of kindness, like offering to handle a chore or surprising them with a simple gesture, show love in action.

7. Forgive quickly and let go of negativity

Spending years together means encountering frustrations, but holding on to resentment only breeds distance. Instead of dwelling on past mistakes, focus on resolving issues and moving forward. A great spouse chooses to forgive, understanding that love is more important than being right.

Love is a daily choice

A fulfilling marriage isn't built overnight - it's the result of continuous investment, patience, and effort. Choosing to love, support, and grow together each day will not only strengthen your relationship, but also enhance the overall quality of your life.