



Marriage preparation
Vi vil giftes katolsk - English edition

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MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Vi vil giftes katolsk – English edition

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at <http://www.pastoral.dk/givdetvidere>.



Dear Future Bride and Groom,

Congratulations! You have decided to share life and become companions for the rest of your lifetime. We are delighted that the two of you have met, that you want to stay together, and confirm it to one another, God, and the Church. As spouses, you are starting on a journey together and we would like to equip you for this long voyage; that is why you are now reading this booklet. As you may notice, the marriage preparation course consists of eight modules of different length. Consider the modules as your luggage for the journey: maps, clothes, food, and safety equipment. In this way you make sure that you are equipped to handle all the challenges that you will encounter during the trip.

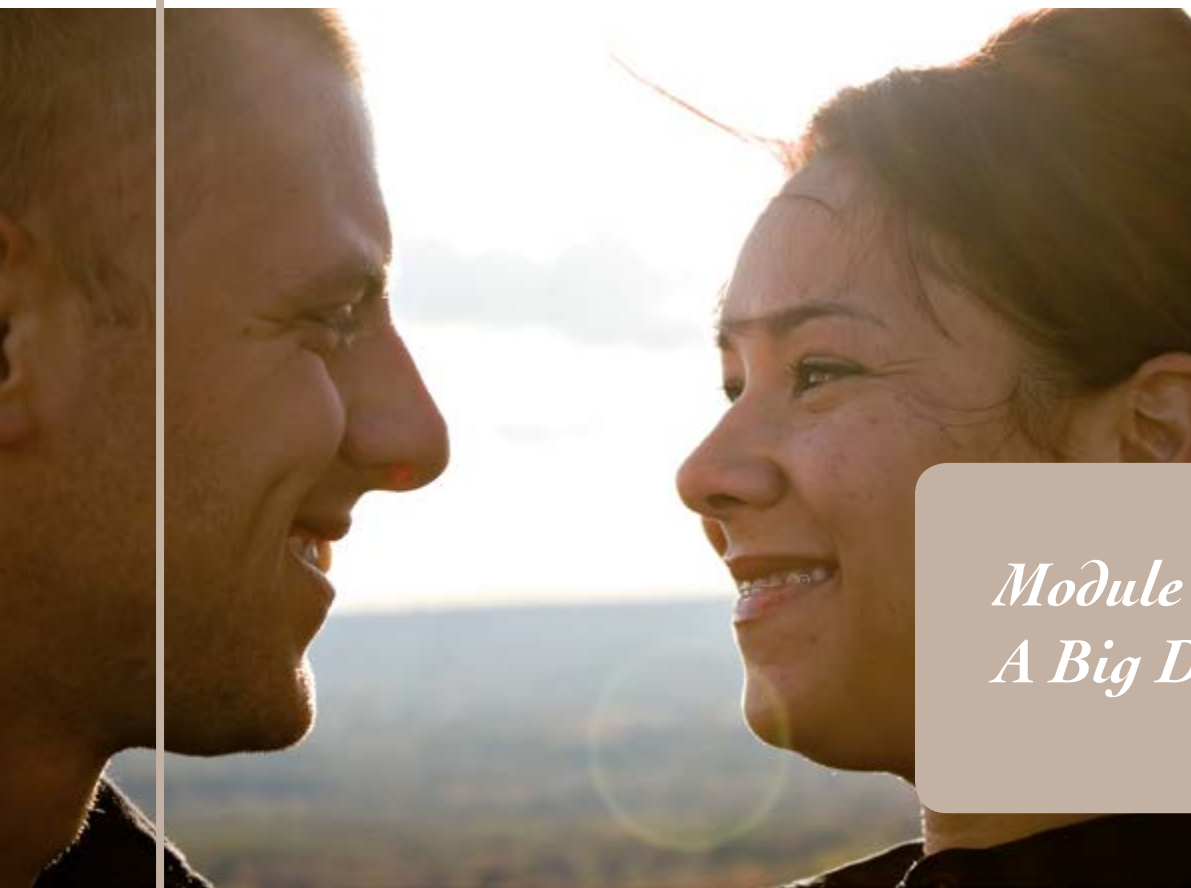
People of different backgrounds have participated in the elaboration of this course. Some of us have gone through painful divorces; we wish that you might not come up against the same difficulties. Others live in happy marriages; we would like you to experience the same joy as us. Yet others are priests who have experience in preparing couples for marriage and accompanying married couples through difficult times. We all have experience in the field that we have worked with in the course.

What is marriage? This is a question, which we will try to answer, and we will also have a look at the tools that can help when you come up against challenges or difficulties.

This booklet is meant as a supplement to the tuition that you are going to receive during our meetings. In it you will find explanations and exercises. You will be making some of the exercises at home but occasionally we will ask you to share your experiences with the teachers and other couples following the course. Reading the chapters at home is not enough. Most of the tuition takes place in your parish and during the one-day session that you are going to follow together with the other couples preparing for marriage.

After going through all the modules with one of the designated tutors of the diocese, you may marry in the Catholic Church. Together, we share the responsibility for the tuition programme; so hurry up and sign up for a one-day session on our website www.vivilgiftes.katolsk.dk. A solid preparation for your journey is lying ahead.

Bon voyage!



*Module 1:
A Big Decision*

Module 1: A Big Decision

What is the purpose of this chapter?

In this chapter, we run through the different requirements for marrying in the Catholic Church. The exercises will help you to find out how well you know yourself and your partner. Together, make the exercises before our next meeting and remember to follow up on the part about the practical details.

Entering into married life takes maturity. In order to marry in the Catholic Church you must share the Church's view on marriage. Through the marriage preparation, we would like to help you discern whether you fulfil the necessary requirements for getting married. You will receive insights and tools that can help you stay faithful to the wedding vows that you are going to make to each other.

Requirements for Marrying

Most people would like to live in a relationship. Many marry and have families and yet, something goes wrong for a lot of people. During 2012, there were 28,235 weddings in Denmark but also 15,709 divorces. There are many challenges in married life that can be hard to live with, but marriage can also be a big blessing for the couples, their families and society. This course will help you judge whether you are ready to take on the responsibilities of married life.

During the first meeting, you spoke with the priest about the different things that are necessary in order for the wedding to be valid in the eyes of the Church. The most important are:

- **Freedom:** In Denmark of today, a lack of freedom is rarely a problem when people marry. Arranged marriages in which one or both partners are forced to marry are rare. More often one of the parties feels forced to marry because of an unwanted pregnancy, or because either he or she wants to get married to get a proof of his or her partner's love.
- **Unity:** By binding yourself to another person, you exclude the possibility of having other partners. You engage yourself in a monogamous lifestyle.
- **Indissolubility:** The dissolution of a marriage is not possible so divorce is out of the question.

- **Being open to having children:** Children is the natural fruit of marriage but not its only purpose. If the couple or one of the partners excludes having children the marriage is invalid.
- **The possibility of practicing the Catholic faith:** A Catholic person may only marry a non-Catholic if the partner acknowledges his or her right to practice his or her faith. The non-Catholic partner does not have to convert but he/she should explicitly say that he/she will not prevent the Catholic partner from living as a Catholic. Furthermore, the Catholic partner must do his or her best to bring the children up in the Catholic faith.

During the wedding ceremony, the priest will ask you three questions concerning the matters mentioned above. Obviously, the priest will make sure that you agree with this view on marriage before your wedding day. It is one of the reasons for following this course.

Maturity

For a relationship to be good, you must both know yourself and know your partner's attitude and wishes for life. Spend time talking about yourselves and your past. Also, discuss your views on different subjects. The exercises on the next page are a tool to help you do this. Answer the questions in the questionnaire and discuss them before our next meeting.

The Priest's Address to the Couple:

Have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

Will you love and honour each other as husband and wife for the rest of your lives?

Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?

Exercise 1

How well do you know each other? Answer the following questions individually and then talk about your results.

- My partner likes to eat:
- My partner does not like to eat:
- His/her hobby is:
- He/she likes:
- He/she does not like these things about him/herself:
- His/her biggest concern about his/her job is:
- His/her worries about the future are:
- The biggest joy in his/her life was:
- The biggest disappointment in his/her life was:
- My partner has spoken openly of earlier relationships:
- My partner's earlier relationships have had a positive effect:
- His/her relationship to his/her parents is:
- He/she prefers these TV-shows:
- He/she likes these things about me:
- He/she does not like these things about me:
- His/her attitude about sex in our relationship is:
- He/she likes to remember these things from his/her childhood:
- What does he/she notice about my brother and sisters or my family:
- What religious questions interests him/her:

Exercise 2

How well do you know yourself? Your background will have a big impact on your relationship.

Answer the following questions individually and then talk about your answers.

Parent-Child Relationships

- What did you coming into the world mean to your parents?
- What was your education like? (Friendly, loving, cold, strict, oppressive etc.)
- How did your mother/father show that she/he loved you?
- How did you show your parents that you loved them?
- How did you react if they had problems?
- Did your parents punish you? If yes, how?
- Did your parents encourage you? If yes, how?
- Have you ever done anything to make your parents love you?
- As a family, did you talk much?
- Were there things you never discussed?
- Did your parents leave you alone with some things/situations?
- How was the relationship with your brothers and sisters?
- Did you parents treat you equally?
- Did your parents set limits in your life?
- How did your parents react when you were

afraid?

- How did your parents react when you were disobedient?
- How did your parents react when you showed your independence?

Your Parents' Marriage

- How did your parents express their mutual love?
- How did your parents deal with their mutual problems?
- Did your parents solve their conflicts in a constructive way?
- Who was the dominating party in their marriage?
- What were the "male areas"?
- What were the "female areas"?
- What did your parents think about the following: That marriage is indissoluble, that marriage is monogamous, that marriage is open to having children?

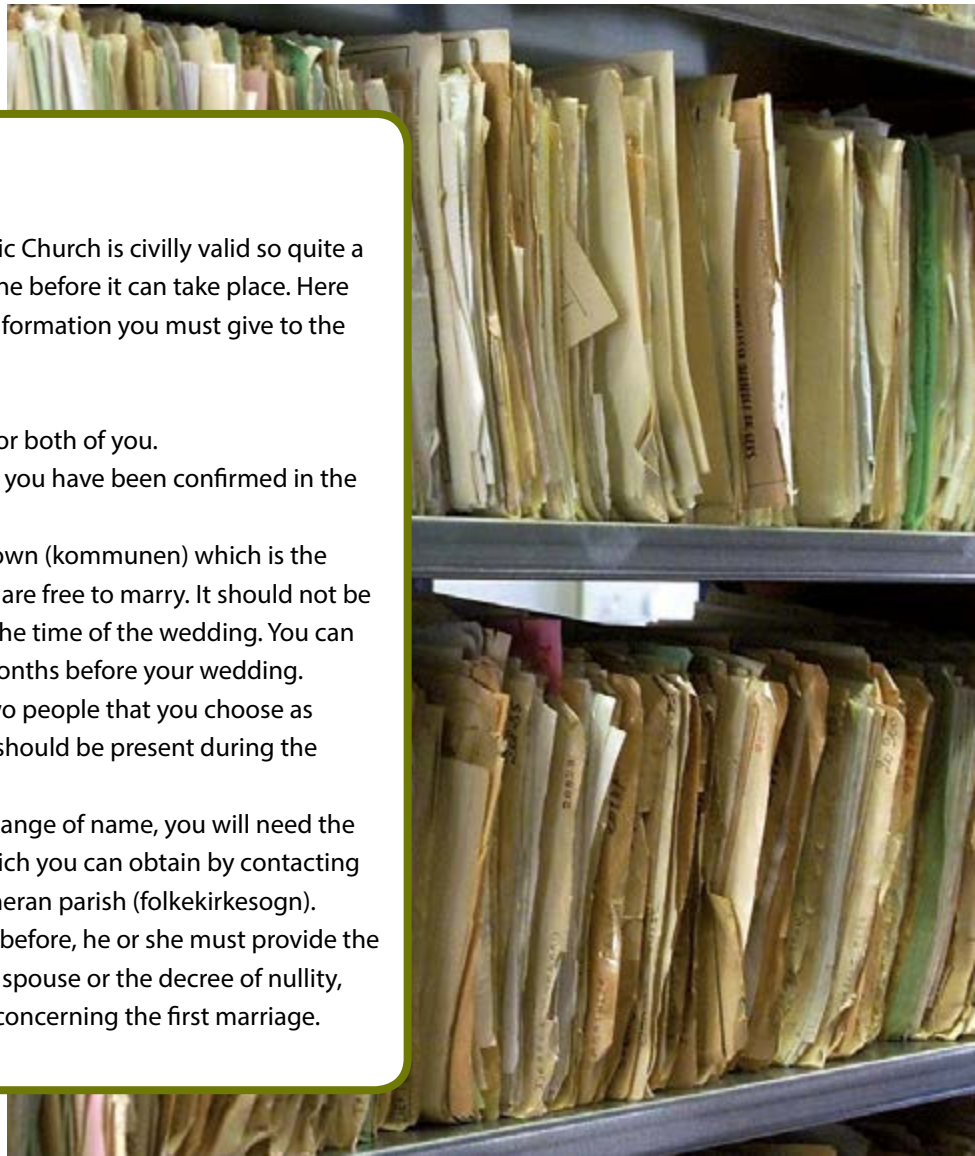
The Relationship with your Brothers and Sisters

- What was your place in the family compared to those of your brothers and sisters?
- What did you mean to your siblings?
- Was there a competition between you?
- What is your relationship with your brothers and sisters like today?

Practical Details

In Denmark, marriage in the Catholic Church is civilly valid so quite a lot of paperwork will have to be done before it can take place. Here is a list of the documents and the information you must give to the priest – the sooner the better.

- Baptismal or birth certificates for both of you.
- Certification of Confirmation, if you have been confirmed in the Catholic Church.
- A "prøvelsesattest" from your town (kommunen) which is the certificate that proves that you are free to marry. It should not be more than four months old at the time of the wedding. You can ask for one at the earliest six months before your wedding.
- Names and addresses of the two people that you choose as your wedding witnesses. They should be present during the ceremony.
- If one or both of you make a change of name, you will need the certificate of name change, which you can obtain by contacting the "kordegn" in your local Lutheran parish (folkekirkesogn).
- If one of you has been married before, he or she must provide the death certificate of his/her first spouse or the decree of nullity, issued by the Church tribunal, concerning the first marriage.

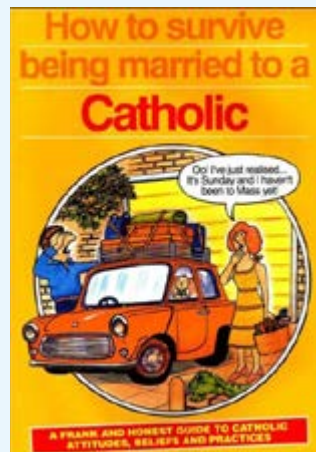


Read More About the Catholic Faith



25 spørgsmål om katolsk tro (25 questions about the Catholic faith):

Ansgarstiftelsens Forlag. In Danish. In a brief and instructive manner, the booklet presents the Catholic Church's answers to 25 relevant questions. It is meant as a help to understanding the Catholic view on God, the human being and the meaning of life.



How to survive being married to a Catholic:

Ligouri Publications. This book was written for those that wish to understand a Catholic boy/girlfriend or spouse, but it would be useful to anybody curious. The authors are Rosemary Gallagher and Michael Henesy CSsR. Illustrations by Michael Henesy CSsR.



*Module 2:
The Call to Married
Life*

Module 2: The Call to Married Life

What is the purpose of this chapter?

Marriage is a sacrament and a vocation. You cannot marry unless your love is more than "being in love". After the meeting, when you come home, you may need to talk about the group exercises again. Try reading the suggested Bible quotes together and saying the prayer together regularly.

In the Catholic Church, we consider marriage to be a vocation just like priesthood is one. At the same time, it is one of the seven sacraments.

Your Wedding only lasts one Day, Marriage is for Life

Right now, planning your wedding takes up your minds. Maybe you have already chosen a date, found a room for the reception, and talked about whom you would like to invite. Your wedding day is a day of joy and you ought to make it an unforgettable event. Later on, this experience can carry and strengthen both the two of you and your love. Besides taking care of the practical things, you are probably also thinking about your common future, your values, and about how you will support one another and help each other grow.

Most couples getting married spend a lot of time making the practical details fall into place. You will probably want to wear a nice wedding gown, a tuxedo etc. Nevertheless, do not focus so much on your wedding day that you forget "getting dressed" for marriage. You will need to bring many qualities and virtues with you if you want to live a good life together. In his letter to the Colossians St. Paul mentions some of them (see Text 1 on page 48) and talks about clothing yourself in them, that is, wearing them. Read the text and think about the qualities that you would like to wear in your marriage; then ask yourself where you may improve. Do not think about how your partner should improve but only about becoming a better person yourself.

Like St. Paul, we would like to see you getting dressed for a good and long marriage. The best way to do this is by helping you to understand what living a married life implies.

Exercise 1

Discuss these questions together:

- 1) Why have you chosen to marry? Why do you not simply live together?
- 2) Why have you chosen to marry in church and not at the town hall?
- 3) Why marry in the Catholic Church?
- 4) To you, what are the five most important things about marriage? What is your vision of marriage?

Then split up and exchange your answers with other couples.

Marriage as a Vocation and as a Sacrament

Priests are called to live as priests. A monk or a nun is called to live his or her life in a religious community. You are called to a life together. God wants something very special for you and for your love. When you accept your vocation, your lives will never be the same as before. On your wedding day, you promise each other to be faithful in bad times and in good. You become each other's companions throughout every day of your life. From then on, you will share life when things are good and you feel like you are floating in the sky. However, you will also be side by side when everything is a mess and nothing seems right. You are choosing this life because you believe that your love can conquer everything.

A vocation develops and grows over time. Your vocation will be challenged; you will experience joy, happiness, tiredness, and defeat. Your vocation will also bear fruit and be a source of joy.

There are different vocations in the Church but they all have something in common: We are called to holiness, and to love God and our neighbour.



To be holy does not mean to be better than everybody else is. It means that you are called to live life with integrity, that

is, in harmony with God, the world and yourself. As spouses, you do this when you love each other and care about your next-of-kin, the family that you have founded. Already in the first pages of the Bible, in the two accounts of creation from the Book of Genesis chapter 1 and 2 (see text 2 and 3 on page 48), God says to man “be fruitful and multiply” and he describes marriage as the couple “becoming one flesh”. Wanting to marry is your expression of following a wish that God has planted in the human being at the beginning of creation. By marrying, you follow the plan of God for you. With this in mind, you can live your marriage as a vocation from God.

A wedding in the Catholic Church is a sacred act also known by the name of sacrament. In the Catholic Church, there are seven sacraments. We receive them at the time of life’s big events such as birth (Baptism), illness (the Anointing of the Sick), when we marry; but also during everyday life: When we celebrate Mass (Eucharist) and receive God’s pardon (Sacrament of Reconciliation), we experience God’s presence and strength in our lives. The Sacrament of Marriage, too, gives you strength in everyday life. It is supposed to remind you that God has blessed your relationship and that he invites you to love each other as he loves us. In this way, you will experience and pass on God’s love through each other, and your mutual love will become at visible sign of God’s love of human kind.

Love is more than Feelings

The Church considers marriage to be a vocation just as priesthood is one. It underlines the beauty and the importance of the responsibility you assume. Marriage is not for everybody and it is not something you should enter into, only because everybody around you gets married. So how will you know if God is calling you to marriage? Obviously, this is a difficult question to answer; God will not send you a text message to tell you! Therefore, ask yourself, how should I fulfil my vocation to holiness? Which is the best way for me

to pass on love to other people? Would I like to spend the rest of my life with my boy/girlfriend? Do we want the best for each other without “possessing” each other?

If you want to marry your partner because you want to make him or her happy and not because he or she makes you happy, you are on the right way to answering God’s call. It means that you love your partner and that you are not only in love with him or her. Love is something very different from the feeling you have when you are in love. Obviously, marriage is not only being in love, and it will not be able to survive on feelings only. When you marry, you choose to give yourself to your partner for the rest of your life. It is not only about the warm feelings you have for each other: these feelings will change through time. When you marry you choose to say “yes” to each other every day through good times and through bad times. Especially when you have children, you will meet challenges that will wear on your relationship. In marriage, you do not always feel love but it will be visible through your actions. Love is when one of you gets up in the middle of the night to change your newborn’s diaper and lets his or her spouse stay in bed. Love is when you tell your partner that you worry about his or her health because of the stress of his or her job. Love is when you forgive your partner for hurting you. All of this takes a will to love. It is much more than feeling loved. Love is a decision. Do not be nervous about the challenge that marriage may be to you. You learn a lot along the way; however, there are certain things that you must realise before you marry. Marriage is for life. Do you agree about what you are entering into? The following exercise should be a help to answer this question.

This is the priest’s opening address to the couple during the wedding ceremony:

Dear children of God, you have come to this church so that the Lord may seal your love in the presence of the priest and this community. Christ blesses this love. He has already consecrated you in baptism; now, by a special sacrament, he strengthens you to fulfil the duties of your married life.

Exercise 2

During the wedding ceremony, you are going to promise to stay together “all the days of your life”. But are there any limits? Discuss these questions together: how far will you go? what is your limit?

- 1) If you have “grown apart”?
- 2) If you discover that your spouse is not the person you imagined?
- 3) If your spouse has been unfaithful?
- 4) If one or both of you becomes violent?
- 5) If...?

Instituted by God

At your wedding you say, “I do” to entering into a lifelong relationship of love with each other. You promise to be faithful and to love and honour each other until death. But why not just live together? What makes marriage so special? What is love? Why do you say, “I do”? How and why does God enter into the picture?

Already in the first chapters of the Book of Genesis, God blesses the love between man and woman. Therefore, we say that marriage is instituted by God; it is part of God’s plan for humanity. God participates in the realisation of this plan. God is love and each one of us is called to participate in this love.

In a way, marriage is an earthly image of the love that God has for the human being. At the same time, it is pointing at the unconditional love that we will experience when we meet God in eternal life.

Marriage is a sacrament and therefore we are not alone in it. God is there with you, helping you to make marriage succeed. No one can do this alone because we all need God’s assistance and grace (this is very clear in the wedding rite, especially in one of the final blessings).

We are all human beings haunted by egoism. Problems easily arise in our relationships. However, the Sacrament of Marriage helps us overcome our self-centredness, egoism and the quest to fulfil our own desires. It also gives us the strength to open up to our partner, to help each other, to give ourselves (CCC 1609)¹.

Love and Honour Each Other

One of the questions that you are asked during the wedding ceremony is: “Will you love and honour each other? Honouring is often overshadowed by loving, but it is just as important a part of the wedding vows as loving. Honouring is actually vital to building a good marriage, but how do you honour your spouse? By valuing and respecting him or her, by showing your spouse that you are attentive of his or her needs, by letting your spouse feel appreciated, admired and respected as a person. You can express your esteem for another person through words, deeds and symbols.

Love is always an outgoing action, which points from you towards another person. It is about giving yourself as a gift to your partner, living for your partner, putting your partner’s needs before your own. Loving is serving each other. It is an act of the will, a conscious wish of being good to your partner. Use praise and other positive words to show your love. Physical touch is also an inexhaustible source from which you may pour in your relationship. All these signs satisfy our longing for being loved and our need of security.

Being Part of the Church

The wedding is an ecclesial act, which shows that you want to be a part of the Christian community. Do you feel a special attachment to the Church? Do you want to go to Mass and raise your children in the Catholic Faith? Why do you want to marry in Church? Because it is beautiful and romantic? Or is it a natural step in your life as a Christian, being part of the ecclesial community? What are your feelings about the Christian community in your church? Were your parents engaged in the work in their congregation? Did you go to Mass as a family? Have you decided to get involved by going to Mass? How do you use the Sacraments of the Church? Is raising your children in the Catholic faith important to you? How do you plan to do this?

Maybe being active Christians before your wedding has been difficult for you. There can be many reasons for this but the risk that you will continue in the same way is high. Habits have to be learned and if we do not know people in our Christian community and have an attachment to them, we will often not feel comfortable there.

Therefore, your engagement in the Christian

¹ CCC means the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The number refers to the article.



community is a responsibility that depends on both of you.

There are great riches to be found in our Christian faith. In many ways your marriage will bear more fruit if you live it in a religious context. Use this marriage preparation as a chance of learning about the Catholic Church and its beliefs. Do not be afraid of asking the priest or your teachers questions, and try to go to Sunday Mass.

The Church wants What is best for You

Has the fact that marriage is a call from God given you something to think about? Be serious about all of the thoughts that you have throughout this course. Either your choice to marry will be strengthened, or you will ask yourselves whether you are ready to get married. There is no shame in cancelling a wedding; it is actually better than having to live in an unhappy marriage that you entered into too quickly.

We hope that this marriage preparation will raise many questions; you should discuss them together. Below you will find another exercise.

Pray for Your Marriage

Everybody needs God's help and strength; people that marry do, too.

Bring God into your marriage: Pray for each other and your marriage every day. Praying individually is good, but there is a special strength to be found in praying together. Try praying the prayer on the right together. Maybe it can become part of your wedding preparation.

Exercise 3

Take some time by yourself to think about what you can bring into your marriage. Make a list of the strong and weak sides in you that may influence your marriage. What will have a positive and what will have a negative effect on your relationship?

Now, take some time with your future spouse and share your views on yourself with him or her.

You should be able to reflect on yourself and put your thoughts into words that you can say to your future spouse. Maybe he or she sees you differently. This exercise can open a fruitful dialogue that will bring your relationship a step further.

A prayer for marriage:

We thank you, God, for the love that you have sown in our hearts. May it always inspire us to being kind, understanding, and caring towards each other, both in words and in actions. Help us to forgive each other's weaknesses and mistakes. Increase our faith and trust in You, and may your providence lead our lives and our love. Bless our marriage with peace and joy; make our love an instrument of your glory and our joy, now and forever. Amen.



*Module 3:
Marriage across
faith and culture*

Modul 3: Marriage across Faith and Culture - Finding a Shared Set of Values

What is the purpose of this chapter?

We will present different challenges and possibilities, which can show up in a marriage when the partners come from different cultures or beliefs. Even couples with the same religious and cultural background will experience that we bring different values and traditions into our relationship. The many exercises are supposed to help you becoming aware of your differences and adjusting your expectations. You will not be able to make all the exercises during the course so try working on them together before our next meeting.

Two out of three marriages in the Catholic Church in Denmark take place between a Catholic and a non-Catholic person. In many cases, the Catholic partner does not come from a Danish cultural background. In this chapter, we will focus on the challenges you may meet and the enrichment you may receive when you marry across faith and culture; even if both of you have the same cultural and religious background, it can help you to find a shared set of values.

Marriage and Partnership

You probably thought about, and maybe even discussed, your reasons for wanting to marry. Besides loving each other, marriage is a partnership in a shared project, which, hopefully, will last for the rest of your lives. This shared project contains a number of practical elements: Education, job, housing, children, friends, and all the things that belong to a rich life in which you help each other reaching your goals.

This family project is your most important task. In it, you will meet the biggest challenges of your life but it can also become your biggest success. No matter whether you come from different social, cultural, or religious backgrounds or not, the most important thing is that you have more or less the same view on the partnership that you enter into. The question is; are you willing to give yourselves fully without any reservations? If you are, it means that your marriage is not a contract that you can dissolve if some of your demands are not fulfilled; marriage is a project on which you never should or can give up. A project in which God is your silent partner.

Exercise 1

Answer the questions individually and then discuss your answers:

1. What is your definition of a successful life?
2. How important is your career, compared to having children? Is it alright not to have children until you have finished your education or have reached a higher salary?



Talking about your Faith

In Denmark, questions about faith and religion are often considered a privat matter, one that you do not talk about or discuss with other people. Believing in God or confessing a religion, which for some feels right, can be rather overwhelming for others. If as a non-Catholic you are in a relationship with a Catholic, you may be surprised at how much the Catholic faith means to your partner. However, the non-Catholic partner is often very open and interested in hearing more about his or her partner's faith. Choosing to prepare for marriage in the Catholic Church is in itself a proof of this interest. Of course, it also happens that a Catholic partner is less engaged in his or her faith than the non-Catholic partner is. If faith is a big part of your partner's life you will have to ask yourself whether it can become a part of your own; if it is not possible, then talk about how you feel about your own and your partner's faith. If you are from two different religious denominations some of the elements of your religions may be the same, which means that you can share something; maybe you can pray together.

Exercise 2

Answer the questions individually and then discuss your answers:

1. On what aspects of faith do you agree (Going to church, saying grace before meals, or evening prayer, for example)?
2. Do you like something about your partner's faith? Is there something you do not understand about it?
3. Do you secretly wish that your partner one day converts to your religion?

Culture Clash?

If you have different cultural backgrounds, you have probably discovered that the meeting between your cultures can be a source of mutual enrichment and help enlarge your horizons and your tolerance. A "mixed couple" has a unique possibility of uniting the best values and traditions of two cultures and making them a part of the foundations of the new family. When you

meet a different culture, you may learn to appreciate the things that you take for granted, because you discover that they are not a matter of course in other parts of the world. For example, the fact that women in Denmark have the same education and job possibilities as men. Nevertheless, if you have an open mind you may also discover that the foreign values can be good for your life. In most cultures, for example, family ties are stronger than in Denmark; many Danes learn to appreciate this particular quality in their foreign spouse's family.

Exercise 3

This exercise is only for couples of different cultural or religious backgrounds. Answer the questions individually and then discuss your answers:

1. Besides the Danish partner, who can help the partner who is not Danish to settle in to life in Denmark; friends, family, colleagues, the Church?
2. Should you celebrate the feasts and holidays of both cultures and how do you choose what to celebrate?

You probably know that communication can be difficult when the partners have different cultural backgrounds; sometimes simply because your mother tongue is not the same. In a multi-cultural marriage, it is important to learn about your partner's customs and traditions. If you want to be able to communicate well with your future spouse you will have to learn about, and try to understand, the culture of his or her country of origin. Being familiar with the cultural character of your spouse's background can help you avoid misunderstandings and conflicts. If the non-Danish partner has arrived in Denmark recently it is a great importance to work on his or her ability to get on in Danish society so that he or she will be able to live a normal live without the constant aid of his or her Danish partner.

Understanding each other

We often talk about mutual understanding as one of the cornerstones of marriage. Understanding each other is often a problem and sometimes it is even more difficult in the case of a "mixed" mar-



riage. Obviously, you should make an effort to understand your partner's origins, when it comes to both culture and religion. However, it is important to understand that there may always be sides to your partner, attitudes, and arguments, which he or she uses, that you do not and cannot understand, and with which you do not agree. Through dialogue, you must decide whether these attitudes are so fundamental that not agreeing about them is unacceptable, or whether you can try building a bridge over the gap between you. Remember, that sometimes you change over time; some opinions that you have always had, in the end do not mean as much as you thought they would; other problems, which you thought had been solved long ago, may arise because they show up again in a different light.

If you count on understanding each other in everything, you will end up being disappointed. In any case, discussing the things that you agree about and those that you do not agree about is important.

Sometimes, when you argue about things and agreeing seems impossible, it may be a good idea to talk to somebody else about it: either friends, your family, or a priest. Naming problems to

somebody else can help you see them in a different and clearer light, and the person you talk to may be just the helping hand you needed to overcome the problem that seemed so big.

Remember that you are not the first "mixed" couple thinking about getting married in the Catholic Church. You can listen to and learn from other people's many years of practical experience; maybe it will help you not feel so alone.

Room for both of You

To the Catholic Church it is important to help its members to live their faith in freedom. This is the reason why it only allows its members to marry a non-Catholic if it has certainty that the Catholic partner will be free to exercise his or her faith. In the same way the Church respects the non-Catholic partner's right to his own faith; nobody is asked to convert in order to marry a Catholic.

If a "mixed" couple decides to marry in the Catholic Church, the non-Catholic partner can sometimes feel that his or her beliefs and opinions are left aside. He or she may be afraid of losing something, something hard to define but which gives him or her a feeling of being in minority.

If you find yourself in this situation, it is important that you find your place in relation to the Catholic Church. Can you identify with anything in the Church? Does anything seem familiar? Or would it be possible to discover something that you like, and which reminds you of your non-Catholic faith?

As a non-Catholic, maybe you have not felt the same obligations to your church or its dogmas as Catholics do. For this reason, you can have a feeling of meeting a set of rules in the Catholic Church that have a big impact both on your partner and the way you are going to live married life. One of your responsibilities as a couple is working out how you are going to deal with these rules in your relationship. Find your own solution, which leaves space for the both of you and your way of practicing your faith.

Exercise 4

Participate in your partner's Mass, worship, or religious ceremony. Talk about the similarities and the differences. Are some parts of the liturgy more important to you than other parts? What is most important? The singing, the readings or the general atmosphere?

1. Whom do you plan to ask for help if you have problems in your marriage? Could the priest or one of your teachers help you?
2. Should you tell your spouse about everything?

What does my Faith mean to Me?

When you consider getting married in the Catholic Church questions about your faith becomes more relevant for both the Catholic and the non-Catholic partner. As a Catholic, living faith may been an important part of everyday life. The Church has always been a natural part of life. Maybe faith never meant much in the life of the other partner; he or she may be of a Christian tradition but has never really thought about it, and suddenly he or she is supposed to give it a lot of thought. Maybe neither of you have ever given much thought to the meaning of faith in marriage, and maybe you feel that it is not very important.

The marriage preparation course can contribute to showing in which way faith can strengthen

marriage. Maybe you can read and discuss some literature about the meaning of marriage (do not hesitate to read the Bible extracts in the Appendix, page 48).

Experience shows us that it is a big challenge to a relationship if faith is very important and time-consuming for one of the partners and the other partner does not share this interest. The one who practices his or her faith will often feel lonely or regret not being able to share an important part of his or her life with the partner. In a similar way the other partner will feel excluded from something important in his or her partner's life, and maybe he or she feels that their spare time could be spend in a better way. These challenges can be overcome and so they do not exclude marrying. However, it is important to talk about them before marrying so that both partners agree about the way they want to live.

Exercise 5

Talk about what faith has meant to your families and about what it means to you today.

1. To what degree can you separate your culture from your religion?
2. Has planning your wedding taken up more of your attention and time than preparing for your marriage?
3. Do you think some things will change between you after marrying?

What unites Us?

In a mixed relationship, the things that separate you can sometimes fill a lot. Maybe people around you point out that your partner is different (different culture or different religious beliefs etc.) but maybe this focus comes from your own thoughts and your doubts about throwing yourself into the project of marriage, let alone marriage preparation.

And yes, obviously there are differences between the two of you; you will have to learn to build a bridge over the gap that separates you. Sometimes, however, it is good to have a look at the things that unite you. The fact that you want to marry means that you are convinced that the love that you have for your partner is more profound than just being in love.

Exercise 6

Answer the questions individually and then discuss your answers:

1. Have you discovered new and positive aspects of your faith or your view on life thanks to your partner?
2. Did your religion help you discover new and more positive aspects of your partner's personality?

Children and Faith

The fact that you have different cultural or religious backgrounds becomes more apparent when you want to have a family. Suddenly you have to make some important decisions about the way you want to bring up your child, both with regard to culture and religion. These matters are often very sensitive because they concern not only ideologies and beliefs but also traditions and customs. You will have to explore and discuss them in order to do what is best for your child. The theoretical discussions about the meaning of believing, and in what way it should be a part of your life, suddenly become very real.

In the case of a mixed marriage, the Catholic partner actually has the obligation to bring up the children in the Catholic faith. To some couples this is not a problem because the non-Catholic partner agrees with bringing the children up as Catholics. However, other couples find themselves in a dilemma because the non-Catholic partner wants to pass on his or her faith to the children. Even though a couple made the decision

of marrying in the Catholic Church together, the Catholic partner does not have the right to decide about bringing the children up in the Catholic faith on his or her own; the non-Catholic partner has the same right to decide about the upbringing of the children. A couple has to find a solution to this problem and it is wise to find an agreement before marrying. The Catholic Church does not interfere with the couples' decision but it demands that both partners know about the Catholic partner's obligation to bring up their children in the Catholic faith.

As you see, it is important to find some answers to the questions that arise if you have children. The questions are many: Who should answer your child's questions about faith? How can you show your child that its parents have different opinions on faith, and maybe ethical questions, without confusing it? What will you do if other children make fun of your child because of his or faith? And how do you consolidate a Catholic upbringing in a society which does not support your views?

Exercise 7

1. Talk about how you want to pass on faith and culture to your children.
2. In what religion do you want to raise your children? Practically what does that involve (going to church, prayer)?
3. What will you do when your children start asking you about God?



*Module 4: And the Two
Shall Become One*

-An Introduction to the Theology of the Body

Module 4: And the Two Shall Become One

-An Introduction to the Theology of the Body

What is the purpose of this chapter?

This introduction to the Catholic Church's teaching on sex will show you that the Church does not condemn sex, but that it looks upon it as an important part of human life and as a way of getting to know God.

Sex is good!

When the Catholic Church speaks against pornography, the use of contraception, etc. it often gives the impression that it is afraid of sex. However, the Church does not condemn sex in itself; it only condemns wrong ways of practicing and of using sex. It is actually the Church's opinion that our sex-obsessed society does not appreciate sex enough! Many people are wild about sex, but have never understood how precious it really is.

Through a long series of teachings, which he called the Theology of the Body, Pope John Paul II has tried to explain the immense value of our bodies and of sex. He did not point the finger at people's great desire for sex; he explains that our sex drive is that strong precisely because it points at something very valuable: ultimately, it expresses a longing for union with God. There is nothing wrong with sexual desire but the problems begin when we use this desire in an unloving way. Our sexuality can do great damage if it leaves the course of God's original plan. One example is pornography, which turns the other person into a thing to be used. The problem in pornography is not that it shows too much, but rather that it does not show enough! The kind of sex you find in pornography has nothing to do with love and therefore it is a very poor image of what sex is supposed to be.

The Body Tells us about God

What is so fascinating is that John Paul II teaches that by observing the human body, we can understand the meaning of life! If we look at the male and the female bodies separately, we will notice that they lack something. When the two unite in the sexual act, they complement each other and



become one body. Therefore, simply by looking at our own bodies, we can recognise that we have a vocation to give ourselves to each other; this perfectly fits Jesus' commandment that we should love one another as he has loved us.

To some people it may seem provoking, that God's way of loving us should resemble the way two lovers give themselves to each other by uniting body and soul, but God himself uses marriage many times as an image of his love for humanity. The Old Testament prophets talk about God's desire to "marry" his people. At the end of the New Testament, in the Book of Revelation, John has a vision of the Lamb (Jesus) who marries the Church.

The invisible God shows himself to us through the human body. He has done this, first and foremost, by becoming a human being himself, when he took human nature upon himself; in a body, and was born of the Virgin Mary. But God also shows us something of himself through human

sexuality. We, Christians, believe that God is love. However, there is no love if one is alone; there must always be someone to love. God is triune; this means that even if he is one, he consists of three persons. Because of this, God does not need anybody else; within the Trinity exists a relation of love. Despite this fact, out of generosity, God has desired to create other persons in order to share his love. So, God is a communion of love and the human being is meant to share in this communion.

Human sexuality reflects this clearly. The bodies of man and woman were created to participate in mutual physical love and in this way, they become a sign of the mutual love of the Trinity; sexual love is an earthly image of the innermost being of the Trinity. In the Creed we proclaim that the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, “proceeds from the Father and the Son” as a result of their love. Likewise, the result of the union of love between the two sexes is a “third person” whenever new life comes into being after the sexual act.

Human sexuality is not only an image of the Trinity; it is also an image of Christ’s love for his Church. St. Paul says, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church.” (Eph. 5:31-32) The Church receives Christ’s love just as a woman receives her husband’s love. Christ left both his heavenly Father and his mother, Mary, in order to give his body to his bride (the Church), so that we can become one flesh with him. Do you realise how far-reaching the vocation to marriage is? You are actually supposed to love each other just as much as Jesus loves humankind!

Reflecting Christ’s Love

John Paul II talks about four qualities of Christ’s love. Jesus’ love implies that he gives himself:

1. Totally. “he loved them to the end.” (John 13:1).
2. Freely. “No one takes it [life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.” (John 10:18).
3. Faithfully. “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:20).
4. Fruitfully. “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10).

These are the things you say “yes” to when you marry in the Church. These four qualities appear again in the questions: “have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?” (Totally and freely). “Will you love and honour each other as man and wife for the rest of your lives?” (Faithfully). “Will you accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?” (Fruitfully). All these are necessary elements in order for the marriage to be valid:

1. Total love: unity/monogamy.
 2. Free love: freedom.
 3. Faithful love: indissolubility.
 4. Fruitful love: being open to having children.
- They are part of the deal if you want to answer to your vocation to married life. However, it is not easy to love the way Jesus loved; do not let that discourage you! We are all human beings, marked by sin, and the Theology of the Body takes account of that fact.

Our Damaged Sexuality

On the morning of Creation, God created man so that he could give himself as gift in the physical and spiritual union with his partner. Man and woman’s mutual relation was simple with no complications and the human being was a pure image of God’s union of love. The fall of man ruined this perfect harmony. Following the fall, Adam and Eve are ashamed to show themselves naked. Shame is the mechanism, which protects a person against being looked upon as a sexual object. Before the fall, there was no shame, because then nobody had the desire to use his partner for his own pleasure. Lust, which only occurred after





the fall, changed everything; love suffered a great defeat.

To John Paul II the opposite of love is not hatred; the opposite of love is using the other person for the sake of your own satisfaction. Therefore, the opposite of love is selfishness. The relationship between man and woman, which used to be about giving oneself to the other, is now about possessing the other person. Today, when somebody goes out to town wanting to “pick somebody up”, Christian morality speaks up, not in order to limit people’s freedom, but in order to obtain what St. Paul calls “freedom from the law” (Rom 7); that is, changing our hearts so that they freely chose that which God represents: loving as he loves.

We can free ourselves from the consequences of the fall, when we free ourselves from selfish lust. Obviously, it is not something that we can obtain entirely in this lifetime. Nevertheless, it is not only a part of future in heaven either. In this lifetime, we can become so free that our eyes will not bring us to fall. Somebody who reaches this maturity will be able to look upon naked

bodies with a pure heart without lust making him or her wanting to possess them. Evidently, this also depends on the way we present the naked bodies. In the world of art Michelangelo, for instance, has painted naked bodies in the Sistine Chapel. He did not wish to awaken lust in people but gratitude for the immense gift that our bodies are.

*The
opposite of
love is not
hatred but
selfishness*

We have to grow in maturity in order to be able to look upon people of the opposite sex with a pure heart. Many people probably only know two reactions to a temptation: giving in to it or suppressing it. The third, and healthy way, is to surrender to Christ who has come to redeem us; thank him for all the good things he has given to us through our sexuality. Ask him to heal the wounds that sin has caused in our sexuality.

Having met a person, whom we love dearly, can help us find this freedom from selfish lust. Suddenly we find ourselves in front of a person of the opposite sex, whom we do not love only because of his or her good looks, but because we recognise the value, that he or she has in him/herself. The thought of using him or her for the sake of our own pleasure would be unthinkable.

Exercise 1

1) How important is physical attraction in your relationship compared to friendship? To what degree do you base your relation on platonic love? And on erotic love?

2) Remind yourselves that because God created it, in itself the sexual drive is good. Therefore, there is nothing wrong in desiring one another; but we must always control our desire so that it does not become destructive. Have you ever regarded your partner as a means to your own satisfaction, or have you ever felt used by your partner?

Exercise 2

Read the Letter to the Ephesians, 5:21-33 (text 4 on page 48) without reading the commentary below. How does the text seem to you? Did St. Paul really support the oppression of women? Now read the

commentary and discuss the text again. How can this text be a model for your relationship?

Exercise 3

The Church teaches that sex only belongs within marriage, because this is where it finds its best expression: between two people who have expressed their binding yes to a total, free, indissoluble, and fruitful love. At the same time there is no doubt that waiting to have sex is difficult, when two people love each other very much. Did you ever consider using the time of your engagement as a period in which you renounce from making love? Abstaining from sex can be the occasion to discover new ways of showing your love, and it may sharpen the joy of the expectation of your wedding day.

Commentary on the Letter to the Ephesians, 5:21-33

Many people find this text provoking because women must submit to their husbands. However, the text ought to be read in its context. It begins “Be subject to one another”. Therefore, we are talking about mutual submission, a mutual giving of self. There is no difference between the vocation of man and woman: the woman must

submit to her husband (=give herself) and the man must love his wife as Jesus loved the Church (=give himself). Jesus gave himself to the Church by dying for it (“just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”, Matt 20:28). We must conclude that it is not Christian teaching to say that woman is of lesser value than man is, and that she should be his slave.



Further reading:

John Paul II's 129 catechesis on the Theology of the Body have been collected and can be found on this website: <http://www.ewtn.com/library/papaldoc/jp2tbind.htm>, but they also exist as a book:

John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them, A Theology of the Body*, (735 p.).

You will find a thorough review and explanation of the Theology of the Body in these books:

Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained: A Commentary on John Paul II's "Gospel of the Body"*, 2003.

Christopher West, *Theology of the Body for Beginners*, Revised Edition, 2009.



Module 5:
The Gift of Fruitfulness
-Family Planning

Module 5: The Gift of Fruitfulness

-Family Planning

What is the purpose of this chapter?

We will summarize the Church's view on family planning and contraception. You will find an examination of different types of contraception and a few comments on why some are more morally unacceptable than others are.

We will briefly introduce some methods of natural family planning. However, in order to learn how to use them, you will have to study them in depth. For this use, you will find documents and links to more information on www.vivilgiftes.katolsk.dk.

Most people have heard about the Catholic Church's prohibition of contraception, but very few know the thoughts and arguments of the Church. Here is a short explanation of the Church's views on family planning. It will also be an introduction to natural methods of birth control approved by the Church.

Giving Priority to your Family

Children are the natural fruit of marriage and for this reason the Church teaches that a couple should be open to the possibility of having children. It is the way to reflect Christ's total, free, faithful, and fruitful love. In real life, it is often a challenge to live it - and for more reasons than one.

We are living in a society where many couples do not have children, and families with more than two children are rare. How did that happen? In order to uphold both a good financial

situation and a career both spouses have full-time jobs away from home. Today, the average age of a Danish woman who gives birth to her first child is above 30. Education, job, house, car and other commodities must be in place before we feel ready to receive a child into our lives.

It is all a matter of priorities. What is most important, family or career? To some extent, society has already put these priorities in place without asking you for your opinion. It will demand sacrifices to go against the flow instead of accepting conditions the way they are. Families with many children may have to cut down on material goods such as holiday trips, a nice new kitchen or bathroom, or the car of their dreams. On the other hand, families that make these sacrifices will experience the close, safe community that only a family can give. We only live once, and the children we did not have when we were young will never come back to us.



The Church's "No" to Contraception

The Church does not allow the use of contraception. However, the reason for this is not that it wants to hold on to a traditional family set-up where the wife stays at home to look after the children.

There reason is a different one; God has created man and he created him out of love. When we bring children into the world and create new life, we become, in a very concrete way, God's collaborators in creation. During sexual intercourse, the spouses express their mutual love, and when they accept the possibility of the creation of a new human life, they open up to the love of God.

For this reason, the Church rejects the use of all types of contraception; when the spouses deliberately eliminate the possibility of pregnancy, they refuse opening up to the will of God. In this way, they exclude the possibility that their love might bear fruit, and they deliberately separate what was meant to go together. Sex becomes the end in itself, a kind of stimulant.

Furthermore, many kinds of contraception seriously attack the holiness of life. There are two kinds of contraception: The first kind prevents conception from taking place. The result of the second kind of contraception is that the fertilised egg will either not be able to implant in the uterus, or be rejected by the uterus and perish. The first type of contraception is called the barrier methods and it includes the condom and the diaphragm, which both prevent the male sperm from reaching the ovaries. Consequently, conception does not take place. Both the condom and the diaphragm are often used with spermicidal creams.

Far more common and effective are the contraceptive pill and IUD (intrauterine devices). The IUD prevents the fertilised egg's implantation in the uterus. In other words, it rejects the new

human life, which perishes. The contraceptive pill contains different hormones: synthetic progesterone (the so-called gestagen) and synthetic oestrogen. The hormones have many side effects and therefore you can buy both the traditional pill with a high level of hormones and the mini-pill. The main purpose of these contraceptives is to prevent the woman from ovulating; but newer products also prevent a fertilised egg from implanting in the uterus – just in case, ovulation should have taken place anyway. Therefore, they also destroy human life.

The manufacturers rarely provide precise information about the way contraceptives work. For this reason, nobody can know for sure whether pregnancy did not occur because a human life was destroyed, even though it is never described in this way. This is why the Church warns us against the use of the contraceptive pill, not only because it simply prevents pregnancy but also because it can destroy the

fertilised egg or eggs. Beside the moral problems surrounding the pill and other forms of artificial contraception, we also should take into consideration the many physical side effects.

Abortion

Does the Church always condemn abortion? The answer is clearly yes. No matter what reasons you may have for defending abortion the problem stays the same; it is a choice between life and death, and the Church will always defend life, and life from the moment of conception. For this reason, the Church also considers taking the "morning after pill" as an attempt at killing human life.

But what about the very rare cases in which pregnancy puts the life of the mother in peril? In these cases, it is the doctor's duty to help both mother and child for as long as possible. If surgery is necessary in order to save the mother, she has the right to choose this solution even if it puts her baby's life in danger. What is important here



is that the doctor does not perform surgery with the intention of provoking an abortion, even if it may be the result. The Church does not impose martyrdom on any mother, but there are examples of women who have chosen to protect their child's life rather than their own.

Natural Family Planning

Nobody has the physical, mental, or material resources to take proper care of an unlimited number of children. Only the couple itself can determine the number of children it ought to have. Some wish to space the births because having a child here and now may be too much of a burden. In these situations, the spouses have the right only to have sexual intercourse during the times when the woman is infertile. This is what we call natural family planning and you can use several different methods in order to establish a woman's infertile moments. This is not contraception, but a method of establishing the periods during which a woman can conceive. It allows the couple to adapt their sexual relations in order to either avoid or achieve pregnancy. If a couple is using one of these methods in order to avoid having children, the couple does not actively prevent conception. One of the most widespread and well-documented methods of calculating the woman's fertile periods is the Billings Method.

An Australian couple, John and Evelyn Billings, developed this method in the late 1950's in collaboration with a number of international scientists. It is also known as the Ovulation Method and is not meant as a type of contraception. The woman does not have to perform any invasive procedures; she simply gets to know her body's natural functions. The method is based on the discovery that the mucus, which the cervix produces in all women, has two functions: during the fertile times, the cervical mucus forms channels which help the sperm travel through the vagina,

up into the fallopian tube where it may fertilise the egg. During times of infertility, the cervical mucus forms a sort of plug, which prevents the sperm from reaching its destination. The mucus changes during the female cycle. By observing these changes, a woman can learn to recognise the time of ovulation.

Evelyn Billings: "Actually, this method doesn't have to take up more than 30 seconds a day in a woman's life. She does not have to do anything at all complicated (...)"

Several methods combine the discoveries of the Billings' with other indicators of female fertility, and these have achieved an even higher degree of certainty. One of these methods is the sympto-

thermal method, in which the woman observes not only the symptoms of her mucus but also the changes in her body temperature. It is actually possible to obtain the same certainty of avoiding pregnancy by using natural family planning correctly, as you can by using a condom or the pill. Only, not all women's cycle is regular enough for the method to be sure, and if the couple does not learn how to use the method properly, the possibility for a pregnancy is bigger than



by using artificial methods of contraception. You can find further information about both methods on www.vivilgiftes.katolsk.dk. On this website, we also provide you with the names of people in Denmark who can give you instruction on how to use the methods.

So what is the difference between different forms of contraception and the Billings Method etc.? By using the Billings Method, the couple does not actively prevent conception. For this reason, the Billings Method is not contraception. The method respects the woman's natural cycle; the couple must abstain from sexual intercourse during the fertile times. It takes self-discipline but this self-discipline can be an expression of love and of how intimately linked sex and love are.

Artificial Insemination

In today's world, many young couples have difficulties having children. The methods above can help the couple determine those fertile days during which the woman has a bigger chance of conceiving. However, if the reason of the problem is another, such as a poor quality of the man's sperm or an abnormality in the woman's ovaries, knowing the fertile moments in the woman's cycle is obviously not enough.

Many Danish couples seek help in fertility clinics where the most common method is the so-called in vitro fertilization. The treatment rarely works at first attempt, however, and it is burdensome for the woman because she has to undergo hormone treatment. Many give up already after the first treatment, among other reasons, because of the mental strain.

The Church rejects all kinds of artificial insemination, including micro-insemination, which is a variety of in vitro fertilisation. However, it allows any kind of treatment that will cure whatever caused the problem, such as hormone treatment or surgery to open up the woman's Fallopian tubes; treatments, which then will allow couples to conceive the natural way. Today you can find clinics that specialise in these natural methods of improving fertility. Try a search on *Naprotechnology*, which is the name of one of

these methods.

The Church rejects artificial insemination for different reasons. The most important reason is that conception takes place outside the woman's body. Technology takes over and controls fertilisation. You may say that because of technology you no longer have or receive a child but that you make or produce one. A child becomes an article, a product. Following the invention of these technologies there has been a storm of ethically reprehensible actions: Freezing "surplus" embryos, which are later used or thrown away; preimplantation genetic profiling, which means, that you chose the embryos that you find best suited and discard the rest; selective reduction, in which you reduce the number of foetus in the mother's womb by killing one or several through a lethal injection in the heart. The result of the use of these technologies is a generally distorted view of the human being.

A child is a gift, not a right.

Fruitfulness does not only Mean, "Having Children"

Even though in marriage you are called to be fruitful and to give life, you must not see yourselves as failures if you do not succeed in having children. Not being able to have children can be

Did you ever consider adopting a child?

According to the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children have the right to grow up in a family. Orphaned children seek a family where they will find security and parents that love them as if they were their own. The child has lost all the things that ought to give it a life of comfort, love, order and security. By adoption it gets a new family and the parents receive the child they so longed for. If you choose to adopt a child, you may make a difference and the child will make a difference in your lives. This is how big the gift you receive is! The process of adopting a child has three stages:

1. Send an application to the Danish State Administration (Statsforvaltningen) and ask for an interview. Following the interview the Joint Council of Adoption determines whether you meet all the requirements concerning age, marital status, health, housing conditions, finances and possible convictions.
2. Once the Joint Council of Adoption recognises that you meet the general requirements for adoption, you will have to attend a pre-adoption counselling course. During the course, you will learn about the conditions, joys and challenges of adoption and you will realise whether this is what you want to do.
3. At the latest one year after the course, you must get in touch with the State Administration, which now decides whether it can approve you for adoption. A social worker will visit you at home, and based on your conversation, he or she will write a description of you. Once the Joint Council of Adoption gives the green light, you may contact one of the non-profit organisations, authorised by the Danish Ministry of Justice to place foreign children in Danish adoptive families.

See useful links on www.vivilgiftes.katolsk.dk

painful, but your fruitfulness is not limited to bringing children into the world. Being a source of joy to your partner is in itself a fruit, and you can, both as couple and individually, contribute to society in ways that will enrich the world. Life does not always work out the way we planned it, but if you are open to it, you can always turn a challenge into a possibility of bearing fruit.

Exercise 1

- 1) How many children would you like to have?
- 2) In what way are you going to plan the size of your family?
- 3) What do you think of natural family planning? What are the advantages and the disadvantages of natural family planning?
- 4) What are you going to do if you cannot have children?
- 5) What will you do if you are told that the child you are expecting might have a serious disease?



*Module 6: In Good
Times and in Bad*

Module 6: In Good Times and in Bad

How to use this text?

At home, read the first part of the chapter (Learning to speak your Partner's Language) and together, do Exercise 1. We will study the second part of the chapter (For Better, for Worse, starting page 36) in class. Go back to the text to make sure you remember the signs of danger that can appear in your relationship.

There is no such thing as a good marriage without conflicts. Wherever people are different, conflicts will always arise; this is not a sign of a lack of love. The question is, how do you deal with the conflicts? In a good marriage, the couple has learned to communicate. In this chapter, we will give you some tools for improving communication and facilitating reconciliation.

Learning to speak your Partner's Language

Thanks to his long experience, American anthropologist and marriage counsellor, Gary Chapman, has discovered that the human being communicates love through five different "languages". The problem is that very few of us understand and speak all five, and most people only communicate with one of the languages. In a relationship, one person may be using all his strength to show how much he loves his partner with a language that does not really touch his partner. Both partners may be making an effort and yet not feel that the other person appreciates the attempts at communicating love, or that he or she even makes an effort out of showing the love that he or she feels.

In his books, Gary Chapman distinguishes between five love-languages:

Words of affirmation: You affirm your partner when you say "I love you" or "you are wonderful" or when you make compliments such as "you look great". The same thing happens when you complement your partner in front of other people.

Gifts: Flowers are one of the most traditional ways of expressing love. But thoughtful gifts can also be small, inexpensive objects that you make yourself.

Physical touch: means holding hands, hugging, kissing or making love.

Quality time: is when you turn your undivided attention towards your partner. During this time, you can just talk and listen to each other, or perhaps you will do something special together.

Acts of service: means doing things for your partner like cooking dinner or mending his or her bicycle.

If a wife's love language is quality time and all she wants to do is spend time with her husband, he may give her all the presents of the world, but

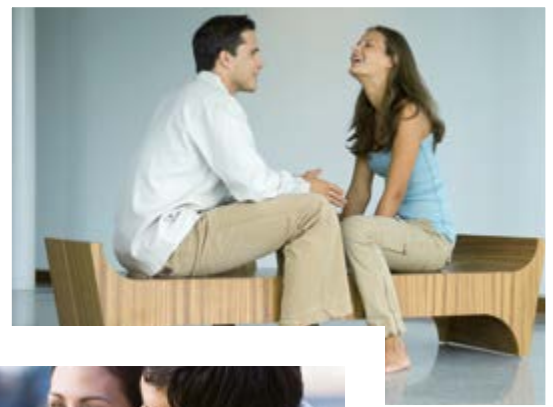
in the end her feeling will be that he does not love her. On the other hand, his experience will be that she does not appreciate his declaration of love and maybe he is disappointed because she never gives him any presents. It takes time to learn somebody else's love language. I cannot ask of my partner always to be a good giver of gifts if he or she never cared much about presents him/herself. It would be like demanding that the French understand Danish if only the Danes speak slowly and pronounce their words clearly.

Spending all day together at your spouse's favourite museum is no good either, if his or her love language is acts of service and he or she would have preferred staying at home to do the gardening together. In the same way it is no use saying "but I washed your car" if your spouse's love language is physical touch.

As you read about the five love languages, you will probably discover which one is your own and which one reflects your partner's preferences. Tell your partner about the things he or she can do to express love in your language. Remember that it may take him or her a long time to learn your language so focus more on learning your partner's language than on how quickly he or she learns yours.

1. Words of Affirmation

- The power of the spoken word is big. There are several dialects in the "affirmation language":
- Compliments show that we are *attentive*.
- Gratitude makes our *appreciation* visible.
- Encouragement is an expression of *care*.



A lack of spoken affirmation can have disastrous consequences for a marriage, whereas loving words build and uphold your partner's self-esteem. Speaking words of affirmation regularly will renew your spouses' feeling of being loved if his or her first love language is words of affirmation.

2. Gifts

If spending money comes easily to you, you will have no problem expressing your love in this way. However, if scrimping and saving is more your style it will be a much bigger challenge. If you never buy "superfluous" things for yourself, you will probably not think about spending money on your spouse. Some presents can be inexpensive, though, and yet hold a huge importance as a visible sign of love. A flower from your garden with a short note attached to it does not cost any money; but it may mean a lot to your partner.

Do not wait for a special occasion such as birthdays, wedding days or Christmas. Spontaneous and unexpected gifts are wonderful, and it makes you feel very special and loved when you receive them. Therefore, if your spouse is going through a hard time, a gift can express, *I understand, I care about you. I am with you in this difficult situation.*

3. Physical Touch

To some people physical touch says more than words. You express love when you give it and rejection when you hold it back. The touch that expresses love comes in many shapes. Some are sexual and some are not. Here are a few examples: holding hands, putting your arm around your partner's waist, a kiss, a hug, a slight touch as you

walk by, a back-rub, sexual foreplay and making love.

Both the sexual and the not sexual touches are important between man and wife. Realising that we can express our desire of physical touch in different ways is important.

4. Quality Time

Time is not only about being close physically, but also about directing your attention towards your partner. People are important to us if we are willing to spend time with them. The more time we give to somebody or something the more, we show how much he, she, or it means to us.

Time is precious and we only have a certain amount of it. We can make more money by having two or three jobs but we cannot expand our lifetime. Sooner or later time runs out. Your time is your life and for this reason, your time is the biggest gift you can offer. It is not enough to say that a relationship is important to you. Prove it by investing your time in it.

5. Acts of Service

By helping your spouse you express your love. Try to fulfil your partner's wishes and needs in a practical way, and serve each other. But how to do it? For example by making a cup of coffee for your beloved, cleaning the house, scraping the ice off the windshield of the car, paying the bills.

Do not think, "Now I have done something for you; it is your turn to do something for me" or "I do this, if you do that". In that case, your motivation would not be love, but calculation.

Exercise 1

We all have our own love language. Which one is yours?
How do you need to “hear” or “see” love?
In what way have you tried to show your partner that you love him or her?
Have you ever had the experience that you did not understand your partner’s love language? – Or he/she yours?
What are the moments when you need to feel you partner’s love more strongly?
When have you had the feeling that your partner “hit the nail” and really succeeded in showing you his or her love?

For Better and for Worse

Few newlywed believe that it is possible to cohabit without problems. There will always be conflicts when you live with somebody, yet many are taken by surprise by the difficulties that show up along the way. Take the chance anyway, and prepare as well as possible for your future life together. We all run into situations caused by both external and internal reasons that we did not expect. If in your own family you have been used to considering conflicts as acceptable and manageable, dealing openly with whatever shows up will be much easier.

When you are in love, you do not want to hurt each other. You want to be able to discuss everything and you wish to be loyal and understanding, and not to attack or betray your partner’s confidence. Above all, you do not wish to repeat certain actions that you have seen done by your parents, by friends or by other people.

Common Difficulties in a Relationship

We experience that often the things that trigger conflicts, insecurity, and doubts about the relationship, are the little seemingly insignificant ones. External factors may be illness, finances, politics etc. and internal factors could be the spouses’ personality, character and background. The problem consists not so much in the difficulties that show up as in how you relate to them. Having a problem is no problem. But not dealing with them is one! The number one key word in handling problems is working together.

Through good collaboration, and this concerns both small and big difficulties, it is possible to become more intimate and end up being stronger than before, both individually and as a couple.

Anticipating Conflicts

The best way to anticipate conflicts is to become work-partners and collaborate on building up your mutual relationship.

Despite all your efforts, tensions may arise. It is perfectly normal and something all couples run into.

Do not wait to do something about it. When you

discuss sensitive subjects, you may become angry and the tension rises.

Remember that we all bring old habits into our marriage.

It is very hard to change these habits but do not let negative behaviour

become a habit in your relationship.

Such behaviour could be:

- **ESCALATION** of a conflict by leaving behind the original discussion and starting to fire words like “always” and “never” at each other.
- **INVALIDATION** of your partner through criticism, irony, neglect or negative attention. All of these will make your partner feel inferior.
- **NEGATIVE INTERPRETATION** of what peoples do and say. Expecting only the worse and receiving things in a negative way.
- **WITHDRAWAL** is when you walk away, either physically or mentally, in order to avoid the conflict. This behaviour complicates conflict.

What are the possible sources of conflict?

- Finances
- The way you educate your children
- What way to spend your time and resources on education and job
- Hobbies and time off from work
- The relation to your in-laws
- Difficulties to communicate
- Exhaustion in times of pregnancy and childbirth
- Difficulties in your sex life
- Roles of the sexes and sharing the household work
- Moving or building a new house
- The Abuse of alcohol or drugs, and violence
- The death of one of your close relatives

Exercise 2

The four patterns of behaviour mentioned above are signs of danger that show that something is wrong in the way you deal with conflicts. Everybody uses these forms of behaviour occasionally; that is no disaster! However, if it becomes recurrent it will wear down your relationship.

- Each one of you should write down which of these patterns of behaviour you recognise from your relationship.
- Give these signs of danger marks between 1 (very rare) and 10 (very often).
- Which one of you falls into one of these ways of behaving most often?

When you have finished, compare results.

Communication Technique

Lay the foundations for safe conversation that allows confidence to grow. We, human beings, have learned filters, behavioural patterns and expectations that make us vulnerable. They are a challenge to good communication, especially when we discuss sensitive topics such as our outlook on life, sexuality, or our emotions. Spouses should always be able to exchange views and thoughts both about important family issues and about problems of everyday life. Always keep in mind that:

As a couple, you are a team working towards a common goal. Protect the unity of your marriage! Your perspective should be lifelong, not short-term. Defend your relationship against cracks. Love is for life! Agree on a common set of rules for handling problems and deal with them as one of the duties of married life. You must solve them together!

If you make these things a priority, you are on the right track. Concentrate on the essentials and avoid destructive arguments. Here is a way to proceed:

1. Identify the problem: What is at stake?
2. Conversation rules: Speak one after the other and let your partner finish what he or she is about to say. Talk about your own thoughts and experience of the conflict, not about your partner's mistakes, faults etc.
3. Discuss different solutions: how could...
4. Discuss what the common good would be.
5. Make a plan of action and distribute responsibilities and tasks
6. Follow up on the problem and talk it through later on (remember the conversation rules).
7. In the end, remember to assure each other that you are lovers and friends and that your relationship is safe.

Conflicts are a part of life and a natural challenge. Men and women have different perspectives and ways of doing things. God created us to be different. This is the biggest source of attraction, charm, and happiness, but often also a source of misunderstandings and conflicts. Difficulties are part of every life and relationship and cannot be made to go away only through good conversation or marriage courses. God created us good, but we were thrown off track by original sin. So, please, do not expect a perfect or conflict-free relationship, neither from yourself nor from your partner.

Forgiving and Reconciling

There are some conflicts, which you can solve on your own. For others you need God's help. Both the sacrament of marriage and the other sacraments have been instituted in order to help us in all parts of life. Help each other by praying together and support your beloved in his or her way of addressing God.



Mass, Communion and Confession can be oasis of peace and meditation, where you may find strength and inspiration for solutions you had not thought of. God can turn a burdensome or difficult situation into something good. Learning to forgive each other and being attentive of a good reconciliation process is essential. Humour is an important element in reconciliation; our sense of humour helps us not to take ourselves too seriously, and it is a good thing to be able to laugh at yourself and your own stupidities, both in front of your partner, your children and other people. We recommend you read and discuss the article "Forsoningens kunst" which can be found on www.vivilgiftes.katolsk.dk.

Be humble (but not submissive); it will protect you against the pride that lies behind much of the harm you cause each other. One way to lessen the tensions is by waiting and holding back harsh answers and arguments. It will help your conversation get going again in a safe atmosphere.

Obviously, there are different degrees of difficulties and problems. The more you learn to handle ordinary everyday conflicts and difficulties the better you will become supporting each other if bigger crises and grieves show up. Do not be afraid to seek help. Family, friends, and different public structures are there to help you. In order to find the meaning behind it all, the courage, and the strength to see it through you can turn to God, both together and individually. The Church is familiar with both accidents, serious illnesses, big crises and death.

Exercise 3

For a while, you have often had arguments about the same issue and you feel that you are not really getting anywhere.

In what way are you going to try to solve the conflict and bring understanding back into your relationship?

In Matthew's Gospel (18:22) Jesus tells us to forgive 77 times (which means always) – are there things you cannot forgive?

Invest in Your Relationship

If you set aside time to take care of your couple,

Exercise 4

Other people's failings often make us angry, but we forget to have a look at ourselves. If you want your marriage to work out, you will have to be able to recognise your own faults. For this purpose, it may be useful to have a look in the mirror once in a while; this reading which we often hear at weddings, can be a big help. Look at your reflection in St. Paul's so-called "Hymn to Love" from the First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 13. Read the verses 4-7: "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious..." etc., but replace the word love with your own name. What does it sound like when, for example, you say "Josephine is patient, Josephine is mild, she is not envious...?" Make this exercise once a week, and if you discover that at times you have not been loving, ask your partner's forgiveness.

you will receive big joys and avoid many problems. Just as a beautiful garden needs tending, so does a good marriage, but we do not always make this a priority. Remember to take time out to be together! We recommend setting aside time for three different ways of spending time together that are all necessary for a good marriage:

- Time to plan the practical things of family life. This is important, especially for those that have children. Set aside half an hour a fixed day every week, in order to establish who picks up the children and when, who cooks dinner, and who goes grocery shopping. Many arguments start because of practical blunders
- Time to discuss your relationship. It is important to take time to talk about how your relationship is doing. This is the time, for sharing your worries or telling about the things, which have made you happy or sad. It is also a good time for making up if you hurt each other. It is preferable to fix an evening once a week for conversations like these; it allows you to revisit important issues later, and not when all you want to do, is tear your partner's head off.
- Time to take care of your friendship. It is

important that being together is not only about solving problems. Remember to recall the things about your partner that made you fall in love. Go on a date where you can cultivate your common interests and express love in your own language. Get somebody to take care of the children and leave all problems and conflicts at home.

Yet another way of investing in your couple is by taking a relationship or marriage course together. We warmly recommend the so-called PREP-course, (Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program), which is pedagogical and not therapeutic. The purpose of the course is not telling strangers about your personal problems, but learning some practical tools for a committed relationship.

Exercise 5

Be open to each other and to the challenges that we have mentioned above.

Set aside time for discussing one of these subjects regularly. Read them again and discuss the parts that are the most relevant to your situation.

Finances:

Take money-matters seriously. Deal with your financial situation together.

What are your priorities in money matters?

Do you join finances, or do you keep separate accounts?

Did you ever consider giving financial help to family abroad? (In case one of you is not Danish)

What are your priorities: Holiday trips or house and car?

What do you need to spend money on (for example trips, clothes etc.)? What does your partner think of your way of spending money?

How do you want to live?

How do you share responsibilities?

Remember thinking about your responsibility as Christians concerning your choice of economy, lifestyle, use of energy and other resources, etc. with regard to both society, the world, and Creation.

Work:

Work and career is of great importance to many people.

What do they mean to you?

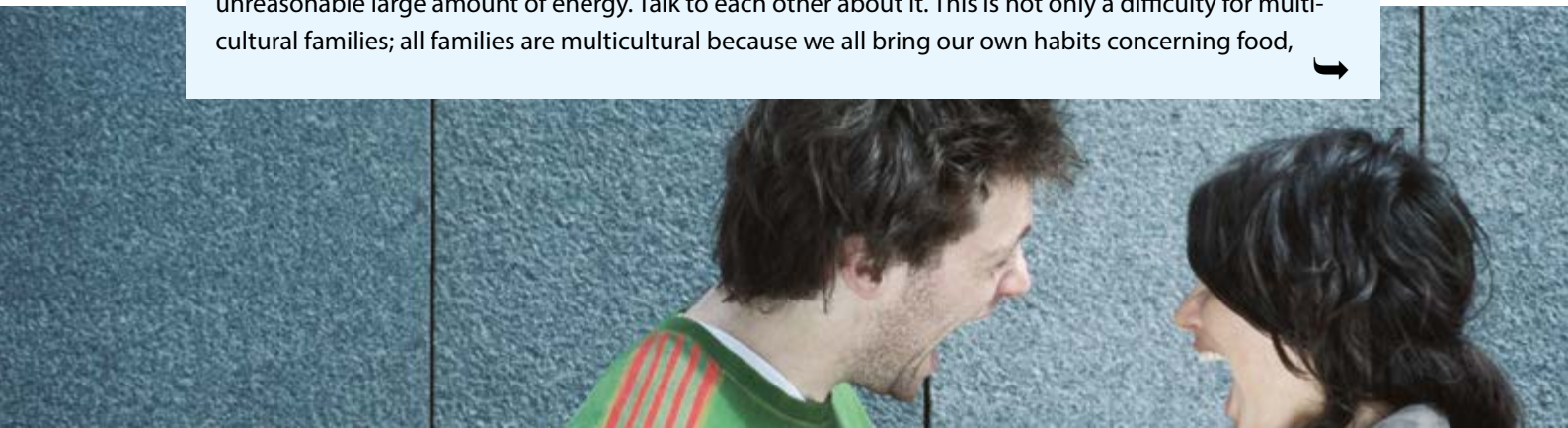
What do the relations to your colleagues mean to you?

How important is continuing training etc. to you? How much time should you spend on it?

What will you do to make sure your work life and your family life work together?

In-Laws:

The relationship with the in-laws are a recurrent problem in married life and many jokes have been made about it. Try to maintain a good relationship to your own families and make sure that the relationship with your partner's family is good, too. This is even more important if you have children. In the early days of a relationship, the love for your partner may help you bear with much irritation caused by your in-laws. Later on it often becomes a source of distress and the reason for spending an unreasonable large amount of energy. Talk to each other about it. This is not only a difficulty for multicultural families; all families are multicultural because we all bring our own habits concerning food,



manners, humour, religious practice etc. from our original family.

You are supposed to “leave mum and dad” and create your own culture, manners and routine. Loyalty should above all be loyalty to your partner and only in second place be to your respective families. Agree on a sort of “foreign policy”.

What does your original family mean to you?

What is your partner’s family to you?

How close do you want the relationship to your families to be?

Which are the good experiences that you can bring along from you own family and into your own relationship?

What are you going to do differently?

Which traditions and routines do you wish to bring into your own relationship?

Communicating:

Being able to discuss things is the vital nerve in your relationship. Never minimise the importance of a lack of communication. Even in busy every-day life, both before and after your wedding, make sure to take time out for speaking together. It is the only real way to learn more about what is going on in your partner’s life right now. Spend time trying to understand your partner’s love language; to understand his or her universe; to discover his or her humour. Talk about what annoys you and explore it before it grows.

What preoccupies you at the moment?

What is important to you just now?

What is the funniest experience you have had?

What are your dreams?

What are your goals?

What or whom annoys you at the moment?



Children:

Many young parents may tell you that they never imagined how life changing and revolutionary having children would be. Their lives have been turned upside down. It is a challenging change, both physically and mentally, which may drain you of your usual patience and consideration. Talk about having children even before you marry. What are your ideas about being both parents and a couple?

If you have children, it will take even more communicating and planning. In order to give room to the incredible joy it is to be a parent, be serious about your partner’s needs.

Abuse:

Always seek help in case any abuse-related problems appear in your family. You have misunderstood love if you believe that you can help your partner by just ignoring the alcohol, the drugs or the violence. Overcome the shame that stops you from speaking. You need professional help, and you show true love by seeking help, even when your partner does not recognise this need.

Further Reading

Gary Chapman, *The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts*, Northfield Publishing, 2010, 201 pages.

Howard Markman, Scott Stanley, Susan L. Blumberg, *Fighting for your Marriage*, John Wiley & Sons, 2010, 448 pages.

Caritas Danmark, among others, organise PREP-courses for married couples. See more on www.caritas.dk or www.familieudvikling.dk.



*Module 7: Family
and House Church*

Module 7: Family and House Church

What is the purpose of this chapter?

This chapter is homework. Read the text and go through the exercises. In class, you are going to present the result of your discussion.

Since you have asked to be married in the Church, God must mean something to at least one of you. In the eyes of the Catholic Church, your new family will be a house church, the first place where your children will hear about faith in God. It is up to the two of you to work out in what way this faith should be lived in your family.

Family as the Work Ground of the Holy Spirit

The family is a biological necessity. It gives the necessary framework for the growth of children who for many years will need their parents' care and education. The parents' love and the security of having a family are a safe setting for children. This is the mutual long-term project we call family.

Our Creator has chosen the family as the work ground of the Holy Spirit. This is where God's life-giving love can develop and bring us as close to him as possible.

In marriage, you pass God's love on to other people. However, you will also experience God's mercy in your daily, practical life together, with your children, with friends and through both difficulties and joys. A determining factor for the future happiness of your marriage is that you both accept your partner's freedom to express his or her opinion and liberty to practice and develop his or her religious faith.

Maybe you do not fully understand your partner's viewpoint. In that case, it is important to meet up where you both can participate and that both of you respect the differences between you. Maybe your Catholic spouse would like to attend Sunday Mass and wishes for you all to go as a family, while you prefer a cosy family brunch on Sunday morning. You may not be able to find

the best solution for everybody. Try to find an understanding that takes into account everybody's needs.

A Sacrament for Life

Marriage contracted in the Church is more than a regular partnership between two people. Catholic marriage is not only the sum of man and woman; God participates. Your mutual love comes from God and therefore you are both responsible for your partner's experience of God's love. It is a big responsibility but you are not alone. The Holy Spirit will help you realise this beautiful ideal. At times, it may take all of your patience, forbearance and forgiveness, but just as you trust that God forgives and receives you in his love; you must also be willing to forgive each other. You are the mediators of God's love no matter what, and just as you have faith in God not letting you down, your partner should always be able to count on you.

Trust each other and try to use prayer as an intimate conversation in which God participates. You can discuss problems or doubts with God in common prayer. Ask yourselves what Christ would have done in such and such a situation; sometimes it may shed a different light on your problems.



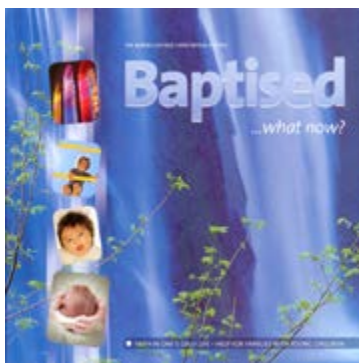
The Use of Symbols and Rituals

You want to get married in the Church. Thereby you show your willingness to let the Christian faith and Catholic practices be part of your everyday life. Use symbols and rituals. Maybe you can hang a cross or an icon on the wall in a central place in your home. During the day, whenever it catches your eye, it will remind you of God who participates in your everyday life, because he was made man in Jesus Christ. For Baptisms, Confirmations etc. many Catholics use specially blessed candles. Throughout the year, on special feast days, some families make an “Easter-garden” with Easter eggs for Easter or gather around the Advent wreath during the time of Advent. Maybe for Christmas you can set up your own Christmas crib.

Especially when you have children, symbols and rituals are important tools because they visualise Catholic values and traditions. Symbols make the Faith tangible, and they are often a good approach for opening up a conversation about it. Even very young children like to talk about religion, so make God and Faith a subject of conversation around the kitchen table. That way your child meets the Faith in everyday life right from the beginning.

Say grace before meals and pray night prayer with your child. Bedtime is the moment for talking about how the day went, and about what challenges your child came up against. The Faith ought to be close and real in order for your child to experience your family as the basic and fundamental church where Christian life is lived. You can find many ideas in the book: “Baptised what now?”, which you can order at the Pastoral-Centret www.pastoral.dk.

Grace before meals can be either a fixed prayer or one you adapt to that meal and the people that are sharing it. You may use this prayer (find more on www.vivilgiftes.katolsk.dk):



A prayer before a meal:
For these and all thy gifts of love,
We give You thanks and praise.
Look down dear Father from above,
And bless us all our days.
In the name of the Father and of the Son and
of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Marriage, a Lifelong Effective Sign

Your marriage is a sacrament in itself, a visible sign for you but also for the people around you. Your partnership is a Christian witness to all the people you meet. For your partner you are a daily sign of God’s love, and, as a couple, you are sign for both your friends, your colleagues, and your acquaintances.

Even when you are alone, you are still partners in marriage, and therefore you represent a family with its own values and norms that may not be those of your immediate surroundings. The foundation of your marriage is the vow that you made during the wedding ceremony. It is the biggest obligation possible.

As a family, you can play a big role in other people’s lives. Together, you should agree on the degree to which your home and your family are available. You probably have dif-



ferent energy and limits for how much you can engage in volunteer work, your children's schools, parties and guests. As Christians, you are willing to help and share with other people. It is not only a matter of sharing money and material goods but also about human care, friendship and sharing ideas.

Christ sent his disciples into the world to announce the good news. You, too, as spouses, are sent to announce and bring into life the good news in your own family, to each other and to your children. You should not preach religion to each other – far from it! You proclaim the good news through your actions and your attitudes. Do the same to the people around you, neighbours and colleagues. In today's modern world, it is important for Christian families to participate in the development of society and the first step is to be aware of what it means to be a Christian family. In this way, your marriage will be a blessing to both yourselves, your children, your family and



society – an instrument of God's will. During the course, present the result of the two exercises and your discussions at home. Did you agree on everything? If not, what did you agree to do?



Exercise 1

1. Is Sunday Mass going to be a natural part of your lives?
2. Will you go to mass together or not? How old should the children be before you bring them to church?
3. What rituals and symbols would you like to use in your everyday life? Will you say evening prayer with your children, for example?
4. Have you thought about going to confession before your wedding?
5. Do you pray for each other and together?

Exercise 2

1. How do you feel about bringing your children up in the Catholic faith?
2. Will you make sure that your children learn the Our Father and other prayers by heart?
3. What Catholic attitudes and opinions do you think are important to society?
4. Do any of the values that you would like to teach your children go against the common norms in society? If yes, how can you help your children go against the tide? Or should your children be allowed not to stand out from other children?
5. What are you going to do if your teenage son or daughter wants to have his or her girlfriend/boyfriend stay over?



*Module 8:
Your Wedding*

Module 8: Your Wedding

In this chapter, we will go through the wedding rite. This is where you have to decide what shape to give to your wedding. A few days before the wedding, you should have a rehearsal so that everybody knows how to move, where to stand, and what to say.

Your wedding day is coming up! You are looking forward to this big day and that is how it should be. It is important that your wedding be a beautiful event in order to attest your mutual love in front of God, and of your family and friends. You will probably want to put your own touch on the wedding ceremony in order for it to reflect who you are; this is more than possible within the framework of the wedding ritual.

The Readings

On www.vivilgiftes.katolsk.dk you will find the Scripture readings that are most commonly used for weddings. It would only be natural that the two of you chose the ones you want. They are separated into three parts (A, B and C). You can select two or three readings. If you chose three readings, one must be from the Old Testament (A), one from the New Testament (B), and one a Gospel reading (C). If you settle on only two readings, the first one should be from A or B and the last one from C. Some of your wedding guests may read the readings from A and B, whereas the priest will read the Gospel.

The Wedding Rite

The rite can take different shapes. Your wedding can take place during a mass, where the Catholic guests may go to Communion, or during a celebration of the Liturgy of the Word, during which the readings mentioned above are read. The wedding rite itself consists of the priests *address to the couple*, which we have talked about in module 1, the *exchange of consent*, where you declare your wish to become spouses, to being faithful and love and honour each other for the rest of your lives, and the *exchange of rings*.

The priest confirms your marriage by declaring it valid. At the end of the ceremony, there will be a special nuptial blessing. As you see, the wedding



rite in itself is not very long. Talk to the priest about it, if one of you is not Danish and would like to integrate some of your home country's special wedding rituals in the ceremony.

Hymns and Music

Make your wedding ceremony even more joyful by choosing hymns and music that you like and that fit the ceremony. You can consult the priest or the church organist – they will be more than happy to help you find some suitable hymns.

You can download the wedding rite from www.vivilgiftes.katolsk.dk.

Exercise 1

You declare your consent either by answering, "I do" to the questions asked by the priest or by saying the the whole formula yourselves. You may not feel comfortable having to say the whole formula in front of everybody (even though the priest usually holds the book for you so you can read aloud) but in any case it is nice to know the consent by heart. You will be able to repeat it, either together or individually, at different times in life. Try to learn the following sentence by heart:

*I (name) take you (name) to be my wife/husband.
I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad,
in sickness and in health.
I will love you and honour you all the days of my life.*

Appendix

Appendix



Text 1: St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians 3:12-17.

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Text 2: Genesis 1:26-31.

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Text 3: Genesis 2:18-24.

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken."

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Text 4: St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 5:21-33.

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.