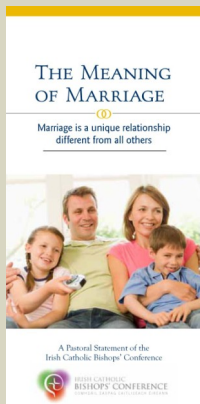




The Meaning of Marriage Newsletter



God's plan for Our Marriage and Family

As we answer God's call in our vocation in the Sacrament of Marriage to follow Christ and to serve the kingdom of God in our married life, we ask, in and through the concreteness of events, problems, difficulties and circumstances of everyday life, that God will come to us, guiding us and enlightening us as we share Christ's love with one another, in our family life, at work, in our neighbourhood, in our contributions to society and in the life and worship of our parish.

Inspired by Saint John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (51) from *The Family Prayer Book*.

Produced by the Catholic Communications Office of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference. See www.catholicbishops.ie.

Bishops' Pastoral Statement *The Meaning of Marriage*

The Catholic Bishops' pastoral statement *The Meaning of Marriage* advises the faithful that "to redefine the nature of marriage would be to undermine it as the fundamental building block of our society. The Church seeks with others to reaffirm ... that marriage should be reserved for the unique and complementary relationship between a woman and a man from which the generation and upbringing of children is uniquely possible." Please read *The Meaning of Marriage* which is available in English, Irish and Polish on www.catholicbishops.ie.

Marriage is important - Reflect before you change it

Marriage is important, and we should reflect deeply about it especially between now and May. The effects of the proposed amendment will be far-reaching for this and for future generations. We should consider these questions:

- should the amendment be passed, will it become increasingly difficult to speak in public about marriage as being between a man and a woman?
- what will we be expected to teach children in school about marriage?
- will those who sincerely continue to believe that marriage is between a man and a woman be forced to act against their conscience?
- can a way be found to protect the civil rights of people who are gay without undermining the fundamental meaning of marriage as commonly understood across cultures, faiths and down the ages?



Protecting marriage is a matter of justice

Marriage means the union of a man and woman. A husband is a man who has a wife; a wife is a woman who has a husband. A same sex couple cannot be husband and wife. A same sex couple cannot procreate a child through the sexual act which expresses married love. Often those who call for legal recognition of same sex marriage see it as a matter of fairness, equality and civil rights. The Church holds that basic human rights must be afforded to all people. This can and should be done without sacrificing the institution of marriage and family and the fundamental role they play in society. This is not about denying civil rights but protecting and upholding the meaning of marriage.

It is a grave injustice if the State ignores the uniqueness of the role of husbands and wives, the importance of mothers and fathers in our society. Children, as they grow and mature, deserve from society a clear understanding of the importance of marriage. Without protection and support for the unique place of marriage in society, the State could, in effect, deprive children of the right to a mother and father.

(Excerpt from *The Meaning of Marriage* pastoral statement)



"The family is the greatest treasure of any country. Let us all work to protect and strengthen this, the cornerstone of society." - Pope Francis.