



The Mature Marriage: Racing Toward Wholeness and Integration

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Adult Education (Sugar Land, TX)

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Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, you gave us marriage for our journey to heaven. Send your Spirit to breathe new life and new light into our marriages, that we may grow more selfless and more Christ-like over time.

The Mature Marriage: Racing Toward Wholeness and Integration

Overview of Today's Presentation

- Maturity (stages & characteristics of marriage)
- The Goal for which We Race
- Wholeness and Integration
- Practical Action for Movement and Change

We will post this PowerPoint presentation on our website for download.

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The Mature Marriage: Racing Toward Wholeness and Integration

“Mature” can mean more than one thing:



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“Mature” can mean more than one thing:



1. Code word for “old”
2. Fully Developed: psychologically, spiritually, socially, et cetera

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Average length of the 1st marriage unchanged in past 60 years.
Any guesses about the length?

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Average length of the 1st marriage unchanged in past 60 years

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People are marrying at older ages.
Fewer people getting married overall.
Divorce rate is high, but peaked in the 1970s.

Stages of Marriage

- Newly Married (0-5 years)



Stages of Marriage

- Newly Married (0-5 years)
- Middle Years (6-25 years) **parenting**



Stages of Marriage

- Newly Married (0-5 years)
- Middle Years (6-25 years) **parenting**
- Later Years (26+ years) **empty nest**



Later Years of Marriage

- Launching Children
- Time Management
- Caring for Aging Parents
- Retirement, Financial Concerns
- Health Concerns

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**What about the other aspect of maturity...
meaning well-developed or fully developed?**

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- Genuine care and concern (Philia)
- Mutual respect
- Deep trust in each other's goodness
- Willingness to work actively on relationship
- Absence of serious conflict
- Shared priorities
- Firm commitment
- Awareness of threats to marriage
- Delay of gratification
- Increasing selflessness (Agape)

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SMALL GROUP BREAK 1:

What are some of the joys and difficulties you face as your marriage ages?

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“Run so as to win...
...I do not run like a man who loses sight of the finish line.”

1 Corinthians 9:24b-26a

What is the “finish line?”



The “finish line” is heaven!

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This race is not of the type in which we are trying to “beat” or “best” others.

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This race is also not one in which we run alone.

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We are called to help others finish, as many as possible...

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...especially our spouse.

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We don't get others to the finish line by beating or prodding them, but rather by love and encouragement.

Goals of Modern Marriage

- Security (safety, economics)
- Family (children)
- Companionship
- Love, Intimacy, Sex
- **Heaven!**

Why We Avoid the Finish Line

- Concept of death is unpleasant to the ego
- Fact is, we are all moving toward death
- Christians have no need to fear death
- One usually dies as one has lived

Wisdom 3:1
Romans 6:8
1Corinthians 2:9

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SMALL GROUP BREAK 2:

What can you do to help your spouse get to heaven?

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At birth, the infant has no concept of self and other.

Over time,
the toddler begins to understand
that mother is not self, that self is not connected to mother.

There are particular times/events
when this separation feels significant.

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In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were one with each other
...and one with God.

“two are one body...naked without shame”
(see Genesis 2: 24-25)

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Because of sin, we are separated from God and from our self.

Due to this separation, we have deep longings for:

Identity

Happiness

Success

Perfection

Truth and Justice

Beauty

Stimulation

Mystery

(David Benner, *Psychotherapy and the Spiritual Quest*)

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Coming closer to others brings us closer to Christ. “Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God. Whenever our eyes are opened to acknowledge the other, we grow in the light of faith and of knowledge of God.”

Pope Francis in Evangelii Gaudium (272)

“The ultimate end of things is to become like God.”

St. Thomas Aquinas

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“No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”
(John 3:3)

“For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.” (Matthew 16:25)

“For me to become a saint means to be my (true) self.”
Fr. Thomas Merton *New Seeds of Contemplation*

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“The beginning of virtue is the struggle to get beyond self and move towards another being. It is a deep instinctive urge towards transcendence of self, the ultimate goal of which is God.”

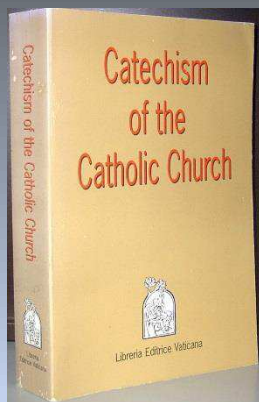
Baron Frederick von Gagern, MD
The Meaning of Life and Marriage

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“Soul friends share not just time or ideas but their deepest self. They bring their whole self to the encounter, particularly their inner self. And the care that we offer for the other person in a soul friendship is a care for his or her whole self, especially the inner self. Soul friends seek to safeguard each other’s uniqueness and nurture the growth of each other’s inner self. They seek to meet each other as whole people and help each other become whole people. They offer each other the sacred gift of accompaniment on the human journey.”

David Benner, Ph.D. *Sacred Companions:
The Gift of Spiritual Friendship and Direction*

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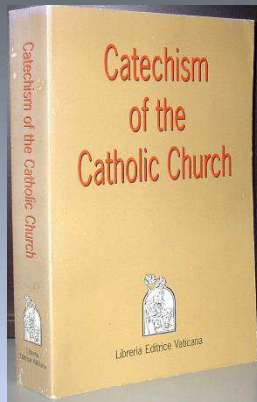


CCC 1644:

“The love of the spouses requires, of its very nature, the unity and indissolubility of the spouses’ community of persons, which embraces their entire life: “so they are no longer two, but one flesh.” Matthew 19:6, Genesis 2:24

Not just of one body...but of one mind, heart, and spirit.

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CCC 1643:

“Conjugal love involves a totality, in which all the elements of the person enter – appeal of the body and instinct, power of feeling and affectivity, aspiration of the spirit and of will. It aims at a deeply personal unity, a unity that, beyond union in one flesh, leads to forming one heart and soul...”

Not just of one body...but of one mind, heart, and spirit.

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SMALL GROUP BREAK 3:

How do you see your self and your marriage becoming more unified?

Practical Action for Movement and Change

- Open/Honest Examination of Your Marriage
- Design a Plan
- Take Action (consistently over time)
- Review Progress (adjust plan, action)

Practical Action for Movement and Change

- Prioritize
- Communicate & PS
- Help other couples
- Volunteer together
- Open work on yourself
- Prayer & Eucharist together
- Regular date nights
- Learn/Practice NFP
- Study Catholic marriage
- Pray for holy marriage

Practical Action for Movement and Change

Study Marriage: Internet Resources

- www.ForYourMarriage.org (from the USCCB)
- www.MarriageUniqueforaReason.org (from the USCCB)
- www.TheAlexanderHouse.org (Greg & Julie; Austin area)
- www.FamilyLifeCenter.net (from Steve Wood)

Practical Action for Movement and Change

Study Marriage: Book Resources

- Catechism of the Catholic Church
- A Marriage Made for Heaven by Popcak
- Five Love Languages by Chapman
- Making Marriage Simple by Hendrix and Hunt
- Ten Lessons to Transform Your Marriage by Gottman

Practical Action for Movement and Change

Study Marriage: Program Resources

- Retrouvaille
- Marriage Encounter
- Retreats for Married Couples
- Teams of Our Lady (TOOL)
- Theology of the Body

Practical Action for Movement and Change

Praying as a Married Couple: **Keep it Simple!**

Mary Kay Malicki, Spiritual Director

Practical Action for Movement and Change

Ideas for Praying Together:

- Hold hands and pray at meal time. Bless the food and give spontaneous prayers of petition.
- Pray for your children by name, one at a time.
- Have a book and read a meditation.
Keep it short (3 to 6 minutes)

Practical Action for Movement and Change

Ideas for Praying Together:

- Read the day's Gospel and discuss it.
www.usccb.org *US Conference of Catholic Bishops*
- Hold hands and pray the “Hail Mary.”
- Give room for the Grace of the Holy Spirit.

Practical Action for Movement and Change

SMALL GROUP BREAK 4:

Which of the practical actions might you try?

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And now, a brief commercial...

...followed by an opportunity for questions and comments.



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- Nonprofit 501(c)(3), sliding scale, no insurance
- Mental illness, addiction, and spiritual distress
- Faithful to the teachings, values, and traditions of the Catholic Church
- www.gratiaplenacounseling.org



- In business 2 years, growing rapidly
- 90% of clients are Catholic
- Clients from 37 different parishes
- 25% of cases are for marriage counseling
- Many new clients are already taking psych medications
- Addictions: drugs, alcohol, sex (esp. porn), video games
- Spiritual Direction



Staff:

- Dr. Ken Buckle (founder, president, psychologist)
- Mary Kay Malicki, MS (spiritual director)
- Rosanna Iseri, MA (working on Texas licensure, from CA)
- Pui Au (UST practicum student, from Hong Kong)
- Daniella Colburn (UH student, from Mexico City)



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- “Loving and Eating Well” group w/Dr. Ken Buckle



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