



SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

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Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference

Columba Centre, Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co Kildare



The Meaning of Marriage

“Marriage is a unique relationship different from all others”

Bishops encourage everyone to read *The Meaning of Marriage*, a pastoral statement published by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, which advises the faithful that to redefine the nature of marriage would be to undermine it as the fundamental building block of our society. Key points in the document, which is available on catholicbishops.ie and in leaflet form in parishes, include:

- Married love is a unique form of love between a man and woman which has a special benefit for the whole of society. Marriage is a total communion of life and of love with God of the married couple in their family life.
- An essential characteristic of marriage is the biological fact that a man and a woman can join together as male and female in a union that is orientated to the generation of new life.
- Children have a natural right to a mother and a father, and this is the best environment for them where possible. It is therefore deserving of special recognition and promotion by the State.



“Marriage preparation should be understood as a life-long catechesis – or itinerary of faith – about the Sacrament of Marriage” - Synod

In October Archbishop Diarmuid Martin represented the bishops in Rome at the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the theme ‘The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelisation’. The message of the Synod was a call for a radical renewal of the Church’s pastoral support for marriage and the family. Marriage preparation should be understood as much more than a requirement for the wedding day, rather as a life-long catechesis – or itinerary of faith – about the Sacrament of Marriage. It was emphasised that marriage preparation, and the accompaniment of marriage, belongs within the work of parishes and the day-to-day life of evangelisation. In the words of Pope Francis in his final address: “I have seen and I have heard – with joy and appreciation – speeches and interventions full of faith, of pastoral and doctrinal zeal, of wisdom, of frankness, of courage, and of parresia. And I have felt that what was set before our eyes was the good of the Church, of families, and the ‘supreme law’, the ‘good of souls’. And this always – we have said it here in the Hall – without ever putting into question the fundamental truths of the Sacrament of marriage: the indissolubility, the unity, the faithfulness, the fruitfulness, that openness to life”.

The Ordinary Synod will take place during October 2015. At their Winter General Meeting in Maynooth, bishops agreed that planning and preparation in the Irish Church for the Synod should begin early in the New Year.

NEWS SNIPPETS

- This year’s online Advent calendar is live on catholicbishops.ie featuring the words of Pope Francis, Mass readings, an audio *Thought for Today*, video and text resources, prayers for the season and  Advent music.
- Trócaire’s Christmas gifts include chickens, goats and school kits to help families  in developing countries build a better future. Ranging from €7/£5 to €200/£150, they are on sale on trocaire.org and by calling 1850 408 408 (RoI) or 0800 912 1200 (NI).
- Read the statement from the Bishops’ Conference Winter general meeting on www.catholicbishops.ie.
- View the video for the Year of Consecrated Life on www.catholicbishops.ie.
- The World Day of Prayer for Peace will be celebrated on 1 January 2015 on the theme ‘No longer slaves, but brothers and sisters’.
- Catholic Schools Week 2015 takes place from 25 Jan- 1 Feb on the theme: ‘Catholic Schools Called to Serve’.
- Happy Christmas!

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Pope Francis’ Tweet of the Month: “Indifference towards those in need is not acceptable for a Christian.”