

Don't Let Experience Go Unused: Children Can Benefit from It

• What shall we tell our children as they are to be married?

In the past year, while speaking to various groups in the parishes of our diocese, this is the question most asked of me as a single parent of seven and as the director of Ministry for the Separated and Divorced Catholics of the Rochester diocese. My answer is simple — "Tell them what you wish you had been told before you were married," and be honest and loving in your telling.

• Tell them to set priorities in preparing for marriage.

Suggest that they see a priest as soon as they become engaged. At their first meeting he will, hopefully, facilitate a discussion relative to their faith and the direction of their married life.

Secondly, suggest they set up their time to experience marriage preparation or Engaged Encounter also in the same time frame. They might discover that they really haven't known what the other was thinking all this time. Questions to be addressed might include: Will God be the center of our marriage? How much do children mean to me? How important is a new car to me? What are my thoughts about a night(s) out with the

boys or girls? How will we handle our money? — and many, many other topics that cause friction in a home.

In my work with the separated and divorced, statements like, "I never knew it bothered him/her when..." and "He/she expected me to... just like his/her mom/dad does," are heard over and over again.

• Tell them it is a hard task and you must work at a marriage every day.

Just as they have had to work hard at school to do well, just as we work hard to succeed at our jobs, so, too, we must work daily on a marriage for it to grow and prosper. Say "I love you" frequently — it works great in the middle of a disagreement. Do things that say "I care about you as a person and I care what you think and feel — I might not agree, but I do care."

Remind them that the intimacy of marriage is not just physical, but is also mental, emotional, and spiritual. Tell them of the importance of their being open with each other on all those levels.

Let them know the importance of "little things" in a marriage; that it's the little things that can hurt them. Because hurts and problems seem small, we often think

they do not matter, but as they build through the years, we often find that they matter quite a bit.

• Tell them that love, true love, is so very important.

"Love is only love when it is given away." The "love high" is so exciting that sometimes our young people get carried away with wedding preparations and forget to talk to and listen to each other. Their communication is necessary to give them a better perspective of this lifelong mate. It is up to us as parents to guide them to take this time to give the "love high" a chance to level off and see things as they are and the realities of life.

Lastly, tell them that you, their parents, love them and pray for them to have happiness in their life together. Tell them that you and God are their trusted friends. Encourage them in the importance of their being well prepared for the Sacrament of Marriage. I've gone through the pain of divorce... it's better to be well prepared for marriage. Take the time. It will be well worth it in the end.

Love and peace to you — parents who care,
Angela Gallo
Director of Ministry
Separated, Divorced, and Widowed Catholics

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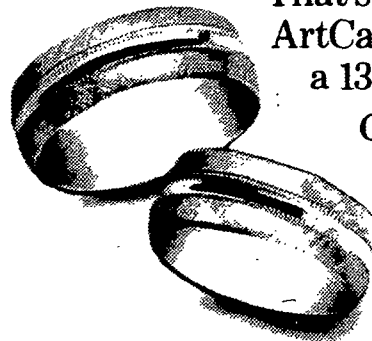


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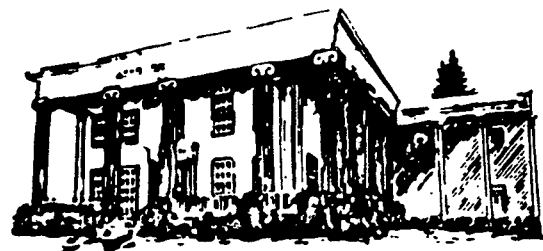
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