

# Fall Marriage

## Pope: Sex isn't top priority in marriage

By Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — While the sexual life of married couples has a real value, it cannot be the basis for a lasting marriage, Pope John Paul II said. "Every healthy psychology and philosophy of love is in agreement" that marriage must be based on the total commitment of the husband and wife to each other, the pope said.

Continuing a series of general audience talks on the laity's role in the church, Pope John Paul said last month most Catholics are called to a life of holiness through "the union of faithful love," the generation of children and the Christian education of their offspring.

The church is convinced that marriage is an important vocation to holiness, he said, even though it is "shaken today by the influence of some currents of thought fed by the hedonism spreading in every society."

In the church's view, "the love of Christ is the source and foundation of the love which unites husband and wife," he said. It is a "true conjugal love and not only an instinctive impulse."

"Today sexuality is frequently exalted to a point that obscures the profound nature of love," the pope said.

"Certainly, the sexual life has its own real value, which cannot be undervalued, but it is a limited value which is not enough to be the foundation of the matrimonial union," he said.

The true love of husbands and wives is made concrete in their mutual support and generous dedication to each other, the pope said.

Through the sacrament of matrimony, he said, "Jesus Christ, with his absolutely faithful love, gives Christian spouses the strength of fidelity and makes them able to resist the temptation of separation, which is so widespread and seductive today."

## Program targets couples entering second marriages

By Chris Kissell  
Catholic News Service

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Carrie Kemp says she and husband Gary still had "real serious reservations about getting into another marriage" when they got engaged after failed first marriages 12 years ago.

But after attending a church-run premarriage program they came out committed to each other and converts to the program. Now they help others preparing for second marriages.

"If you don't work on a relationship, it dies," Carrie said in an interview with the *Catholic Bulletin*, St. Paul-Minneapolis archdiocesan newspaper. "It may not die in a divorce court, but it will die."

"In first marriages, 50 percent of all couples divorce," said Notre Dame Sister Adaire Lassonde. "But it's 64 percent in second marriages. That says something about people not being prepared." The program focuses especially on the kinds of challenges that confront people in second marriages.

Sister Lassonde works at the Catholic Center for the Separated and Divorced, the archdiocesan agency whose pastoral programs include preparation courses for those entering second marriages.

Since the premarriage program was started in 1980, most of the 1,000-plus couples coming into it have been referred by the archdiocesan tribunal.

People seeking to remarry in the church contact the tribunal to see if there are grounds for declaring their first marriage null. Until recently, when it granted an annulment to someone considering remarriage, the tribunal had made participation in the premarriage program a requirement.

The policy of mandatory participation had its pluses and minuses. Many of those who attended came only because they had to, and they were initially hostile as a result, the Kemps said.

Gary recalled the first time he and his wife led a program in the neighboring New Ulm diocese, where they lead several weekend seminars a year.

"We had to drive 100 miles just to get there," he said. "When we arrived, we found six couples, and every one of them was madder than hell."

Carrie said by the end of the series of sessions, most of the couples had come to appreciate the program. Only one couple did not find it helpful.

Sister Lassonde applauded a recent tribunal decision to make the premarriage program voluntary and one option among several available.

But she said it will present a challenge to the program. Instead of the tribunal, "the pastors themselves will have to be the initiators" encouraging people to enter the program, she said.

The Kemps and Sister Lassonde agreed that many of the challenges facing those entering a second marriage echo those facing first-timers. They said these include issues of conflict resolution, money management and potential difficulties in interfaith marriages.

But there are other issues unique to second marriages, they said. Topping the list is the need to find common ground when one or both partners bring children from a previous marriage into the new union, as the Kemps did.

Sister Lassonde estimated that 80 percent of participating couples are in that situation.

"We're telling them that their relationship with this person (they are about to marry) is the most important thing in their lives, and they're telling us that their relationship with their children has always come first," Sister Lassonde said. "How do we work this out?"

She said widowed people, who bring their own baggage to second marriages, also have benefited from the program.

"They kind of tend to sanctify their old relationship ... It's a little more difficult for them to see that there's a different way to do things," she said.

All three agreed that finding a mutual spirituality — whether Catholic or otherwise — is the most important component of both the program and a successful second marriage.

## Challenges of remarrying to be explored in seminar

FAIRPORT — Challenges facing remarried people can be numerous and unique, noted John DeMott.

"There can be interference from an ex-spouse or in-law; or issues of money driven by separate maintenance payments or support payments; or visitation," said DeMott, a parishioner at St. Monica's Church in Rochester. He and his wife, JoAnn, run New Horizons, a diocesan program for couples with at least one partner who has been married previously.

"It can create psychological stress on a relationship if a spouse is writing a check once a month to somebody from the past, or merging stepchildren with children from a current relationship," DeMott added.

To help couples who experience such

difficulties, New Horizons is sponsoring a seminar by Dr. Dennis Boike titled "Nurturing the Seed of Love," this Tuesday, Sept. 20. The program will run from 7:30 to 10 p.m. at St. John of Rochester School, 10 Wickford Way.

Boike serves as director of Boike Marriage, Family and Individual Counseling, Inc. He is a parishioner at Church of the Transfiguration in Pittsford.

In addition to Boike's talk, the Sept. 20 event will include a prayer service, refreshments and an opportunity to socialize with other remarried couples.

Registration for the program is \$15 per couple, payable at the door. Those who have questions or wish to pre-register may call Sylvia Mancuso at 716/328-3210, ext. 295.

— Mike Latona

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