



# Opening of the Year In-Service for Catechists and Catholic School Teachers

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## Purpose

The purpose of this in-service is to acquaint the catechist and Catholic school teacher with an understanding of God's love as covenant, Pope John Paul II's theology of the body, and marriage as an encounter with the mystery of Christ's union with the Church. Participants will explore these topics through discussion of four articles from Catechetical Sunday 2010, the theme of which is "Marriage: Sacrament of Enduring Love." The in-service is designed to last two and one-half hours.

## Schedule

Welcome, introduction, and explanation of the process (5 minutes)  
Opening prayer service (15 minutes)  
Part I (40 minutes)  
Break (10 minutes)  
Part II (40 minutes)  
Break (10 minutes)  
Part III (30 minutes)

## Materials Needed

- Tables and chairs, arranged for groups of 4 to 6 participants
- Table with refreshments
- One smaller table to be used as a prayer setting
- Book stand, covered with a colorful or liturgically appropriate cloth, for Bible or Lectionary
- Two candles, to be placed on either side of the enthroned Scriptures
- Hymnals for singing the hymns chosen for the opening prayer service
- Newsprint and markers for each table

- Overhead projector, or equipment for a PowerPoint presentation
- Tape or CD player and appropriate religious music
- Copies of the four articles downloaded from the “Teaching Aids” section of the online resources for Celebrating the Catechetical Year 2010 ([www.usccb.org/catecheticalsunday](http://www.usccb.org/catecheticalsunday))
- Podium or small table for the presenter
- Microphone, if needed
- Sufficient copies of any handouts

## **Preparation**

When preparing this in-service, please read the four articles found in the “Teaching Aids” section of the online resources for Celebrating the Catechetical Year 2010 ([www.usccb.org/catecheticalsunday](http://www.usccb.org/catecheticalsunday)). This in-service is based in part on those articles.

The following steps will help you plan and customize the in-service:

- Develop an appropriate opening prayer service, lasting about 15 minutes, using the suggestions provided in the prayer service section below. Select the hymns or songs to open and conclude the prayer service.
- For the presentations in this in-service, prepare a PowerPoint slideshow or handouts to summarize the main points. Be sure to make sufficient copies of any handouts available for participants.

On the day of the in-service, the following steps will help you prepare:

- When you set up the room where the in-service will be held, prepare the prayer table by placing the cloth over the table with the book stand that will hold the Bible or Lectionary. The prayer table should be set away from the podium but be in a prominent location in the room, visible to all participants.
- Set up tables or chairs in the room.
- Set up a tape or CD player, if you wish to have appropriate instrumental or religious music playing as participants gather.
- Bookmark the Bible or Lectionary to the passage(s) you have chosen for use in the opening prayer service. (See the prayer service section, below, for suggested readings.)
- Have copies of the schedule, the four articles, and any other handouts available at the door as participants sign in.
- Ask one or more participants to read the Scripture passages that will be used during the in-service.

## ***Welcome, Introduction and Explanation of the Process (5 minutes)***

When it is time to begin the in-service, welcome everyone. Explain the purpose of the workshop, and review the schedule. Also explain that the materials used to prepare the presentations come from the online resources for Celebrating the Catechetical Year 2010, from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

### ***Opening Prayer Service (15 minutes)***

Lead the opening prayer service that you have planned. Be sure to include each of the following elements, including at least one of the following Scripture passages that lie at the heart of the four “teaching aid” articles:

- Opening hymn or song
- Opening prayer
- One or more Scripture readings from the following list:
  - Deuteronomy 6:4-9
  - Leviticus 19:17-18
  - Leviticus 19:33-34
  - Matthew 22:34-40
- Time for reflection on the reading
- Prayer of the faithful
- Concluding prayer
- Concluding hymn or song

## **First Presentation (40 minutes)**

The first presentation covers the article “Scriptural Reflections on Marriage and Marital Love as Reflective of the Union of God and Israel and Christ and the Church” (by Fr. Lawrence Boadt, SSD).

### ***Love in the Old Testament***

Draw participants’ attention to Fr. Boadt’s discussion of the purpose and meaning of the covenant of God’s love: “Key to understanding the special love that God shows Israel is the fact that he chose her, calling Abraham and promising him and his descendants blessing forever.” Israel is to respond to God’s love by following the one God, being one people, and praying at one sanctuary.

Leader: As you can see, God’s love as covenant contains two main qualities in its nature: *promise* and *demand*. As covenant, love is not primarily a feeling but fidelity to God’s promise—a matter of willing and doing (not just feeling). Promise and demand make up the whole of the covenant. Each reality involves different characteristics, but for love to be real, promise and demand are always active.

## Promise

Leader: God's love is creative and fruitful in nature. It is unitive also. It leads us to a clear goal (the Kingdom of Heaven) through a fulfilling journey. The promise is also a presence—we are never alone, through God's grace and especially the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Ask the participants to discuss the following question at their tables:

- What does love's promise look like (in everyday life)?

Allow a few minutes for the tables to discuss possible answers. Then ask each table to designate a spokesperson, and have each spokesperson report the table's answers to the larger group.

## Demand

Leader: God's love is a call to recognize love's order and purpose. Love demands of us a responsibility, commitment, fidelity, and accountability. As God loves, we are called to do the same.

Next, ask the participants to discuss the following question at their tables:

- What does love's demand look like (in everyday life)?

Allow a few minutes for the tables to discuss possible answers. Then ask each table to designate a spokesperson, and have each spokesperson report the table's answers to the larger group.

## ***Love in the New Testament***

Draw participants' attention to Fr. Boadt's explanation of how love in the New Testament builds on the themes established in the Old Testament.

Leader: "Expansion" becomes the important focus in the New Testament. Loving one's neighbor now becomes a universal call, even toward one's enemies. Fr. Boadt writes, "Forgiveness stands as the test of love." The purpose of love moves from a faithful commandment "to do" to faithful "union" with God through Christ. The intimacy of the Old Testament is completed by the New Testament call for oneness between God and his faithful people.

Note that Fr. Boadt describes the New Testament imagery of marriage for love. Here the demand of *fidelity* is emphasized, as is the creative and fruitful quality or nature of God's love.

Pose the following question and invite answers from those gathered:

- Why *must* God's love be both faithful and creative?

If necessary, guide participants to the preferred response: because of who God is and who he has revealed himself to be—the Triune God, a communion of love always faithful and fruitful—God always acts in this way, for God is love. In revealing himself he also reveals the nature of love.

Next, summarize how Fr. Boadt explains covenant as faithfulness, permanence, and fruitfulness. The New Testament also adds to the image of love. God's love for Israel now expands to Christ's love for the Church. It is this love for the Church that is best explained as sacrament.

Invite the participants to discuss the following reflective questions. The gathering can discuss the questions as a large group; or, if the gathering is large, you may wish to have them discuss the questions at their tables first, with a spokesperson reporting back to the larger gathering.

- Why is marriage a sacrament of the Church?
- St. Paul reminds his converts that they must live "in Christ." How does marriage accomplish this?
- Fr. Boadt states, "Since the Vatican Council, the Church's *emphasis* on marriage has been expressed much more in the spiritual categories of *salvation, grace, and divine promise* than in the language of legal contracts" (emphasis added). How or why are these spiritual categories important for a healthy and holy marriage?

### ***Break (10 minutes)***

Allow time for participants to take refreshments, share with one another, and use the restrooms.

## **Second Presentation (40 minutes)**

The second presentation builds on the first, discussed Pope John Paul II's theology of the body, and presents the essence of another two "teaching aid" articles for Catechetical Sunday: "Theology of the Body: A Catechesis into the Fullness of Love" (by Fr. José Granados, DCJM) and "Responsibility and Joy: Catechesis and the Promotion and Protection of Marriage" (by Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz).

Provide the participants with some background on Pope John Paul II's "theology of the body." Explain that it grew out of his addresses at 129 General Audiences, in which he explained in detail his analysis of the human person and sexuality in light of creation and the divine plan revealed in Christ. These addresses took place within the first five years of his papacy. Pope John Paul II focused on key biblical texts to support his reflections on human sexuality and the significance of the body.

Covering the following three points is the most intensive part of the in-service. You may wish to develop a PowerPoint presentation or overheads to guide participants through the subject matter. All three points summarize sections of the theology of the body; the third point introduces the two articles to expand the discussion. The

second presentation concludes with time for the participants to discuss reflection questions.

### ***Point One: Adam and Eve and Embodiedness***

Pope John Paul II began his series of addresses on this subject with an explanation of Adam and Eve (see Gn 2-3), asking what their story teaches us about maleness and femaleness and God's purposes for the world and for us. An important lesson here is that our bodies are necessary to who we are. It is through our "embodiedness" that we live as persons. Also emphasized in these talks is the teaching that man and woman are made in God's "image" and "likeness" (Gn 1:26), with an ability for each to give self to others. Man is only capable of becoming complete (complementarity) when woman is created, and he recognizes her as a human creature (not an object) like himself, although different. In communion with Eve, Adam learns that loneliness is overcome by love. In authentic loving, when I give myself as gift to another and when that is reciprocated, my own identity is not only left intact—it is enhanced.

Here is where Pope John Paul II shows how God, in his very triune life, is modeled in the way we ought to be, the way we are meant to be, and the way we find our meaning. Communion is intrinsic to who we are as made in the image of God. We are made for communion. That radical giving and receiving (remember the thoughts in the first presentation on *demand* and *promise*) is an image of the interior life of God, a Trinity of Persons.

Finally, Pope John Paul II calls our embodiedness as persons—male and female, both fully human but different—a sacramental reality. Shame is a result of a "breakdown" in this reality. It results when we treat the other as object; *using* rather than *loving* violates the truth about our humanity.

### ***Point Two: The Connection of Lust to Adultery***

Another group of Pope John Paul II's addresses takes up a familiar text: the Sermon on the Mount, particularly Matthew 5:27-28, the passage that addresses the connection of lust to adultery. Original Sin is defined, again, as the corruption of self-giving into self-assertion—doing it my way instead of the right way. Attraction to the other, in love, should lead me to desire what is good for this person. Lust is for fleeting pleasure through the use, or abuse, of this person. In lust, the other is an object. In a lustful relationship, there can be neither giving nor receiving (of persons) nor communion.

The Catholic sexual ethic does not try to erase desire. The challenge is not simply to speak of self-control or being "appropriate," but to strive for self-mastery: the mastery that allows me to give myself to another intimately and in such a way that I affirm and enhance the one I love in his or her giving and receiving.

### ***Point Three: Marriage***

Marriage is the focus of the last series of addresses by Pope John Paul II. This is where the articles titled “Responsibility and Joy: Catechesis and the Promotion and Protection of Marriage” and “Theology of the Body: A Catechesis into the Fullness of Love” merge quite nicely.

Marriage is the most ancient sacrament, because from the beginning, marriage is the ordinary reality that reveals the extraordinary truth that God created the world in an act of love. Since New Testament times, the Church has recognized an image of Christ’s love for his Church in the love of husband and wife. The boldest statement we can make on the true meaning of sexual love (within the bond of marriage) is that it is an act of worship. “Conjugal life becomes . . . liturgical” when the intimate “language of the body” becomes an experience of the sacred, an experience of what God intended for the world and for us “from the beginning” (Pope John Paul II, *The Theology of Marriage and Celibacy: Catechesis on Marriage and Celibacy in the Light of the Resurrection of the Body* [Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1986], 363-368).

### ***Reflection Questions***

Ask the participants to reflect on all they have learned about the theology of the body through the following two reflection questions. They may also wish to use Archbishop Kurtz’s article as a resource for this discussion.

If time allows (or the group size requires it), ask participants to discuss these questions at their tables first, with a spokesperson for each table reporting back to the larger gathering. Or you may conduct the discussion with the entire group.

- If sexual love is an expression of giving and receptivity (promise and demand) between persons who have made a profound commitment to each other (marriage), then what type of sexual conduct is seen as abusive to this type of relationship and why?
- Some Catholics have observed that the theology of the body, though powerful and beautiful in its explanation, is virtually impossible to accomplish and maintain. How would you respond to this observation?

### ***Break (10 minutes)***

Allow time for participants to take refreshments, share with one another, and use the restrooms.

### ***Third Presentation (30 minutes)***

The third and last presentation focuses on the major parts of the Rite of Marriage, using the “teaching aid” article “Celebrating the Rite of Marriage” (by Bishop Ronald P. Herzog).

Begin by reading to the participants from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraphs 1601, 1602, and 1621, as a starting point to explore the marriage covenant and the Rite of Marriage. (Consider providing these passages on an overhead or in a PowerPoint presentation.)

Ask the participants to discuss the following question at their tables, and then invite a few to share their responses with the larger gathering:

- How does the Rite of Marriage—either within the Nuptial Mass or outside of it—help a couple to recognize and believe that their *experience* is an encounter with the mystery of Christ’s union with the Church through the sacrament?

In reflecting on the word “experience” in the above question, guide the participants to include some commentary on their own experience of the Rite, as participants or as witnesses, and how it has helped them to be anchored in the mystery of God’s love.

If there is time for only one question to be explored at this point in the in-service, invite participants to discuss the following:

- How would the Rite of Marriage be weakened if any of its parts (Entrance Rite, Liturgy of the Word, the Exchange of Consent, the Blessing of the Rings, the Nuptial Blessing, or the Solemn Blessing) were omitted or not faithfully celebrated?

The following sub-sections include discussion questions about each part of the Rite, drawing on Bishop Herzog’s points in his article. Depending on time remaining, and the size or other needs of the group, you can pose the questions to the entire group for discussion, or you may wish to have each table discuss the questions and report back to the group.

### ***1. The Entrance Rite***

In his article, Bishop Herzog explains that the Entrance Rite is usually not followed: “In many instances, the groom is almost an afterthought, and rarely does the beautiful symbolism of the couple being escorted by their parents find a place. . . . The very nature of an entrance song is that it is sung by the entire assembly. The typical triumphant processional music accompanying the bridal procession misses the point.”

Invite participants to answer the following questions:

- Why do many Catholic weddings tend to follow this part of the Rite inaccurately?
- Why should we follow it faithfully?

## ***2. Liturgy of the Word (Including the Homily)***

It seems obvious how the Rite of Marriage would be weakened without the Liturgy of the Word, yet many couples express little interest in selecting readings for their celebration.

Invite participants to discuss this point:

- Why do many couples avoid selecting readings for the Liturgy of the Word or seek to skip it entirely?

## ***3. Rite of Marriage Proper (After the Liturgy of the Word)***

This is a good time to remind participants that although the couple is the focal point in the Rite of Marriage, all the sacraments of the Church envision the active participation of the assembly. The assembly needs to be witness, not spectator.

Invite the participants to discuss the following questions:

- The couple states their intentions in the presence of the assembly. What are the three necessary components of the intention?
- The couple declares their consent. Why are couples no longer allowed the option to write their own vows? What is the significance of the priest's statement "What God has joined, men must not divide" (*Rite of Marriage*, no. 25)?

## ***4. Blessing of the Rings***

Bishop Herzog considers the blessing of the rings "the most significant symbolic action in the entire ceremony."

Invite the participants to discuss his assertion. Why might the blessing of the rings be the "most significant symbolic action"? Did participants know that the rite offers no provision for use of a unity candle?

After the blessing of rings, the Mass proceeds in the usual way. After the General Intercessions, the Rite suggests that the bride and groom bring up the gifts of bread and wine. Invite the participants to discuss the important symbolism of this act.

## ***5. Nuptial Blessing (Immediately Following the Lord's Prayer)***

The Nuptial Blessing focuses on asking God to be present in the lives of the newly married couple so they can be effective signs of God's eternal love.

## ***6. Solemn Blessing***

As Bishop Herzog describes, many pastors, catechists, and parish ministers have expressed frustration about experiences in which engaged couples and their parents are "far more concerned with the attire, decorations, music, and reception than with the active planning of the liturgical celebration."

A final discussion question concludes the in-service by reviewing the essence of the Rite's purpose:

- How can the Rite be used as an "action plan" for couples to realize that the marriage covenant is an encounter with the mystery of Christ's union with the Church through the sacrament?

## Evaluation Questions

- Did the in-service meet your expectations with regard to catechesis on the Sacrament of Marriage?
  - Describe one new insight you will take away from today's in-service.
  - Describe one new aspect of the sacrament that you learned about today and would like to hear more about.
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