



ABOUT CATHOLIC MARRIAGE FEATURE STORY  
**Marriage As Sacrament**



In a sacramental marriage, God's love becomes present to the spouses in their total union.

When the Catholic Church teaches that marriage between two baptized persons is a sacrament, it is saying that the couple's relationship expresses in a unique way the unbreakable bond of love between Christ and his people. Like the other six sacraments of the Church, marriage is a sign or symbol which reveals the Lord Jesus and through which his divine life and love are communicated. All seven sacraments were instituted by Christ and were entrusted to the Church to be celebrated in faith within and for the community of believers. The rituals and prayers by which a sacrament is celebrated serve to express visibly what God is doing invisibly.

In a sacramental marriage, God's love becomes present to the spouses in their total union and also flows through them to their family and community. By their permanent, faithful and exclusive giving to each other, symbolized in sexual intercourse, the couple reveals something of God's unconditional love. The sacrament of Christian marriage involves their entire life as they journey together through the ups and downs of marriage and become more able to give to and receive from each other. Their life becomes sacramental to the extent that the couple cooperates with God's action in their life and sees themselves as living "in Christ" and Christ living and acting in their relationship, attitudes and actions.

Catholic teaching holds that sacraments bring grace to those who receive them with the proper disposition. Grace is a way of describing how God shares the divine life with us and gives us the help we need to live as followers of Christ. In marriage, the grace of this sacrament brings to the spouses the particular help they need to be faithful and to be good parents. It also helps a couple to serve others beyond their immediate family and to show the community that a loving and lasting marriage is both desirable and possible.

Pope Paul VI wrote: "By it [the Sacrament of Matrimony] husband and wife are strengthened and... consecrated for the faithful accomplishment of their proper duties, for the carrying out of their proper vocation even to perfection, and the Christian witness which is proper to them before the whole world" (*Humanae Vitae*, n. 25).

February 2011



*St. Alphonsus  
 Religious Education*

**PowerSource**

**Ask God:**

1. To help you nurture your children's developing faith.
2. To show your children how he's with them as they grow.
3. To help you make important faith decisions

**Parenting Insights**

**In Shift (Group), Brian Haynes discusses the value of at-home "Faith Talks" for leading kids spiritually:**

1. **Faith Talks should occur regularly and be age-appropriate.** Each week, set aside time to focus on biblical truth in a relational way.
2. **Faith Talks should focus on God's Word.** Read the Bible together, celebrate it, and adjust your lives accordingly.
3. **Faith Talks don't have to be difficult or formal.** Make them fun; for example, go outside on a hot day and compare standing in the sun and shade. Then read and discuss Psalm 121:5.
4. **Faith Talks are a priority.** They shouldn't depend on children's choices or attitudes. God instructs parents to be intentional about leading their children spiritually.

## OpenTheBook

"Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."

1 Timothy 4:7-8

### Why Praying At Home Is Not Good Enough

*It's good to pray at home, but private prayer is personal and one-dimensional. But when you come to Mass, you pray with your whole being. You use your senses. You see, hear, smell taste, and touch. You use your body by genuflecting, sitting, kneeling, standing walking, and singing.*

The Mass gives you an opportunity to:

- ~ Seek forgiveness for your sins.
- ~ Learn how God's word impacts your life in the homily.
- ~ Offer yourself to the Lord.
- ~ Experience the miracle of bread & wine changing into the Body & Blood of Christ.
- ~ Receive a special blessing.
- ~ Be commissioned to go out and make the world a better place.



"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are **ON THE ROAD**, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." **Deuteronomy 11:78-19, NLT**

Get your children thinking about their own faith milestones by asking these discussion-starter questions:

1. What times or events in your walk with God stand out the most to you, and why?
2. As you grow up as a Christian, what occasions would you like to celebrate, and how?
3. In what ways has your faith changed since you were younger?
4. What can I do to help your faith grow even stronger?

### Family Experience: Journeys With Jesus

Use these activities to celebrate your family's past and future.

- **Family Timelines**—You'll need a 6-foot piece of butcher paper, markers, masking tape, and a Bible. Tape the butcher paper to a wall. Together, create a timeline of your family's journey with God using words, drawings, and Bible verses. Include marriages, birthdays, and milestones, such as when a child entered preschool or when you moved. Add fun memories and difficult times that affected everyone (illnesses or injuries, vacations, job or school changes, and so on).

Afterward, discuss these questions: "What are our best memories? What difficult events have we overcome? How did those events make us closer? How have you seen God moving in our family through the years? How have we experienced God's faithfulness? What are our future dreams for our family?"

- **God's Path**—You'll need a map of your hometown, a highlighter, a Bible, and a red marker. Mark important spots on the map, such as your home, school, church, friends' houses, and more. Highlight the roads your family uses most often. Read aloud Psalm 139:1-3. Say: "God always knows where we are, what we're doing, and where we're going. He has big plans for us as we grow and get to know him better. God loves us and will always be with us." With a red marker, draw a large heart around all the map sites you've highlighted. Hang up the map as a reminder of God's promises.



This page is designed to help educate parents and isn't meant to endorse any movie, music, or product. Our prayer is that you'll make informed decisions about what your children watch, listen to, and wear.



## What's Playing at the Movies

**Movie:** *Gnomeo & Juliet* (Feb. 11)

**Genre:** 3D animated comedy

**Rating:** G

**Cast:** James McAvoy, Emily Blunt, Michael Caine

**Synopsis:** In this film, which features several songs from Elton John, two garden gnomes get caught up in a feud between neighbors. Despite their many obstacles, Gnomeo and Juliet try to find lasting happiness.

**Discussion Questions:** How would you define "love"? Why does everyone seek love? What challenges stand in the way of having loving relationships? Read aloud 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Which of these traits of love is the most difficult, in your opinion? What are some ways we can love other people better—even when they don't act lovingly in return?



## Culture & Trends

**What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:**

- Parenting forecasts for 2011 include more emphasis on "couple time," child-rearing philosophies such as RIE and Free-Range Kids, and "flash sale sites" for buying kiddie gear.

### The Rite

Religiously honorable, but aesthetically tentative drama, based on real events, about a skeptical seminarian (Colin O'Donoghue) who has pursued priestly studies mainly to get a free education and avoid following in the footsteps of his undertaker father (Rutger Hauer). To forestall his dropping out, a superior (Toby Jones) dispatches him to Rome to complete a Vatican-sponsored course in exorcism. There, he shares his ongoing doubts with a reporter (Alice Braga) who has enrolled in the class for research purposes. But inexplicable experiences during his apprenticeship with a veteran demon fighter (Anthony Hopkins) challenge the young cleric's secular certainties. Though shaky on a few details, director Mikael Hafstrom's conversion tale resoundingly affirms faith and the value of priestly ministry. Yet the effort to showcase the main character's spiritual journey as an old-fashioned chillfest weakens its ultimate impact. Possibly acceptable for mature teens. Incest and suicide themes, some gruesome imagery, incidental irreverence, a couple of uses of profanity, a few rough and crude terms. **A-III -- adults.** (PG-13) 2011



- Kid-trend predictions include 1980s fashions, personalized party décor, more GPS-tracking technology, and iPad-hungry youngsters. (village.com)

## Quick Stats

- 65% of parents say texting helps them communicate more often with their kids when they're apart. (Parenting)
- 65% of young children were spanked by a parent at least once during a four-week period. Parents who fight with one another are more likely to spank their kids, research shows. (medicalnewstoday.com)

<i>Herotopia.com</i>	In this virtual world, players learn about global culture and defeat bullies. Some portions are free; others require paid membership.	Web; ages 6-12
<i>Learn Science</i>	Mini-games teach players about anatomy, biology, physics, and more. Geared toward first- through fourth-graders.	E; Nintendo DS
<i>Lost In Shadow</i>	In this fantasy-based game, the action takes place between shadows. Violence has a key role but isn't excessive or graphic.	E10+; Wii

**GAME RATINGS KEY:** EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



ENCOURAGEMENT

## New Year's Resolutions For Couples

What can you do for your marriage in 2011? Try making a New Year's resolution to improve your relationship. Here are some ideas to get started:

- Schedule several "Date Nights" for the first few months of the year.
- Improve communication. You can start by taking marriage quizzes at the USCCB site <http://foryourmarriage.org/marriage-resources/tips-and-advice/marriage-quizzes/>
- Draw up your 2011 household budget together. Discuss spending priorities, including charitable donations.
- Take turns selecting a favorite Scripture passage to pray about each week. Share your reflections with each other.
- Resolve to read at least one book on how to strengthen your relationship. Unsure where to start? Browse through the [archived book reviews](#).
- Dust up your religious education. Read a brief summary of [what the church believes about marriage](#). Why is marriage a sacrament, as well as a vocation? What is marital spirituality?
- While it's important to strengthen the marriage relationship, marriage is also a sacrament of service. It's true that marriage benefits the couple, but it's also good for their family, community, and the Church. Resolve to do at least one service activity this year, as a family or a couple. Perhaps it's bringing canned goods to the local food pantry on a regular basis or helping out with a parish fundraising project.



## First Reconciliation Celebrations

Congratulations to our young people who celebrated the sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time last Saturday. They enjoyed seeing Walter Payton's football jersey and hearing Fr. Brian of despairing while watching a game in which the Bears were down 21-0 in a mistake-filled first half. He almost gave up and left, but was glad he stayed to watch the Bears get past their 1<sup>st</sup> half mistakes to tie the game.... It was a whole new ballgame! He related that feeling to the sacrament of Reconciliation.... We know that we make mistakes, and we also know that we have the gift of Reconciliation to help us to get past those mistakes and start over. Our lives become a whole new ballgame!

Thank you to Mrs. Siorek, Mrs. Szymanski, Mrs. Yanku, Mrs. Mazotti, Mrs. Filippini, Ms. Cody, Mrs. Loisi, and Mrs. Tasso for all their help in preparing our young people for the sacrament. Thank you to Paul Malak and our 8<sup>th</sup> Grade volunteers for your assistance at the services. Photos of the services can be viewed online at <http://stalphonussacramentcelebrations.shutterfly.com/>



# February 2011



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Scouting Sunday 9:45-11:15 AM Track A Sessions  No Deaf RE Sessions 	4:30-6:00 PM Track B Sessions	7:00 - 8:00pm 1st Communion Parent Meeting 	6:00 - 7:30 PM Track C Sessions		<i>Our Lady of Lourdes</i>	2:00 - 3:30 7th Grade Retreat At Lemont Nursing Center 
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
<i>World Marriage Day</i> Track A Sessions Confirmation Penitential Rite 8:30 Tr. A & School 10:00 - Tracks B & C  3:15-4:40 PM Deaf RE	<i>Valentine's Day</i> 4:30-6:00 PM Track B Sessions 		6:00 - 7:30 PM Track C Sessions			2:00 - 3:30 7th Grade Retreat At Lemont Nursing Center 
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
No RE Sessions 3:15-4:40 PM Deaf RE	No RE Sessions		No RE Sessions			
27	28					
9:45-11:15 AM Track A Sessions  No Deaf RE Sessions	4:30-6:00 PM Track B Sessions					