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# Planned Giving News



Office of Stewardship Development

December 2010

Dear Reader,

My office recently sent a large mailing containing an informational flyer entitled "Opportunities to Give at the End of Life." This mailing was sent to those parishioners who have shown a consistent pattern of giving to the annual Diocesan Stewardship Appeal. Studies show that consistency in giving is a better indicator of affinity to an organization than is the amount of a particular gift or gifts. It is important that we as Church encourage our members to remember our parishes as they prepare for their eventual journey to eternal life.

I would also like to give you one final reminder to use the End-of-Year Giving flyer that I mailed to your parish last month. Please copy and/or insert this flyer in your parish bulletin sometime between now and Christmas. The flyer is intended to provide a gentle nudge to your parishioners and provide information on gifting options they might consider when contemplating a year-end gift. The flyer is also available in Adobe Acrobat (PDF) and graphic (TIFF) formats on the [stewardshiprockford.org](http://stewardshiprockford.org) website.

It is truly unfortunate that the State of Illinois seems to be on the verge of redefining marriage, at least civilly. So now what do we do?

As you should be aware, our Diocese has embarked on a program for all of next year designed to strengthen and promote sacramental marriage. It is entitled "[Marriage-Building 2011](#)." The staff of the Family Life Office has been working hard on this effort and has been conducting introductory and training meetings throughout the Diocese. Will your parish become a "Marriage-Building Parish?" This is at least one way we might hope to combat the disturbing nationwide trend of the redefining marriage.

I have included below an article written by Dan Conway entitled *Stewards of God's Gift of Marriage*, which seemed to be timely. Is marriage becoming obsolete? The article talks about the efforts of the U.S. Bishops in regard to marriage and shares some startling statistics. I encourage you to read it.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer you all a blessing for a holy Advent and Christmas season and wishes for a great new year.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Urban". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Deacon Greg Urban

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## Bulletin Blurbs

- **Did you know...** Gifts of appreciated assets (like stocks) make a wonderful gift to your parish or school? You pay no capital gains tax when you transfer the stock and you receive an income tax deduction for its full market value. For information on the best way to transfer stock or a mutual fund to your parish, please contact the Diocesan Accounting Office at 815-399-4300.
- **Estate planning is the way to continue your life's work.** It is vital that you invest some time to insure that your life's efforts will continue in the hands of the causes and people who will most treasure your gifts. Your attorney in consultation with your financial planner can prepare a proper will or trust and make other arrangements for the easy, inexpensive transfer of your estate assets.
- **Imagine a gift that gives forever.** That's exactly what your planned gift to *The Catholic Foundation* for our parish endowment can do. What you give today will strengthen our parish community by providing perpetual financial support.

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## Stewards of God's Gift of Marriage

Have you seen the cover of Time Magazine that proclaims: *Who Needs Marriage? A Changing Institution?* Or have you read the Pew Research Center's report on "the decline of marriage and rise of new families"? Or did you read the Fox News article that says 4 in 10 Americans believe marriage is becoming obsolete?

If you've read any of these reports, or simply observed the increasing number of cohabitating couples, single parents or same-sex couples, then you know why the American bishops have made the defense of marriage one of their top priorities.

According to the Pew study, which was conducted in association with Time Magazine, about 39 percent of Americans say marriage is becoming obsolete. Based on newly-released U.S. census data, nearly 30 percent of children under 18 now live with a parent or parents who are unwed or no longer married. Today, only 52 percent of adults in the United States are married which the Pew research says places the institution of marriage at "an all-time low."

Louisville Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz, who was recently elected Vice President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), is the chairman of the bishops' Committee for the Defense of Marriage. According to Archbishop Kurtz, "today is like 1970 for marriage." Recalling that 1973 was the year the U.S. Supreme Court issued its infamous decision legalizing abortion, the archbishop asked his brother bishops, "If you had seen *Roe v. Wade* coming three years out, what would you have done differently?"

Speaking for the U.S. bishops, Archbishop Kurtz made it clear that there is much work that needs to be done to defend the importance of marriage as a social institution and as an instrument of God's plan for the human race. Americans who recognize the serious threat posed by legislative efforts to change the definition of marriage in order to recognize same-sex unions as marriages must not be silent or inactive, the archbishop said. Unless we work to prevent it, the negative social trends report in the Pew study, and celebrated in the news and entertainment media, will become law.

So, what's to be done? According to Archbishop Kurtz, the U.S. bishops are doing much more to educate the Catholic community about the sanctity of marriage and the threats facing marriage as a social institution. A new [DVD entitled "Made for Each Other"](#) with accompanying educational materials

is being distributed around the country and additional resources are being developed aimed at teaching children. The bishops are also exploring ways to collaborate with other Christian churches in defense of the traditional understanding of marriage.

What can Catholics do to help strengthen marriage and to prevent it from being further devalued as a social institution and as a sacrament?

Begin by affirming the importance of marriage within our own families. Renew our own marriage vows. Provide encouragement and support to our parents or children or siblings who are married. Pray for married couples who are experiencing difficulties. Offer personal testimony to our experience of married love - and to the way that Christ is present in the daily life of married couples.

Teach our children - by our words and our example - that marriage is much more than a social contract or a convenience in living arrangements. Give witness to marriage as a sacrament, a way to holiness and a visible sign of God's love for us. Make sure that our elected representatives (and judges) know where we stand on the importance of marriage as the lifelong union of a man and a woman. Oppose efforts to devalue or redefine marriage. Speak out when necessary in defense of what we know is right and true.

Archbishop Kurtz challenges each one of us as disciples of Jesus Christ: "If you had seen Roe v. Wade coming three years out, what would you have done differently?" Would we have sat idly by and let it happen? Or would we have worked to prevent it?

Now is the time to pray, speak and act. Now is the time to defend marriage - in a positive, proactive and nondiscriminatory way. If we believe that marriage is a gift from God to be cherished, nurtured and shared generously with future generations, then we must be good stewards of this sacred treasure.

Is marriage becoming obsolete? Not if we remain faithful to God's plan, giving witness to one of his greatest gifts.

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