

## “Becoming a Marriage Building Parish” Questions & Answers

1. **What is the origin of the Marriage Building Church initiative?**  
In 2005 the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops began the National Pastoral Initiative on Marriage – a multi-year focus because marriage as an institution has suffered in recent years from:
  - persistent high rate of divorce
  - rapid rise of cohabitation & acceptance of it
  - falling rate of marriage
  
2. **What are the goals of the initiative?**
  - to restore and promote the sanctity of marriage and family across the U.S.
  - to promote more and better ministries to marriage, particularly in parishes
  - to help couples themselves witness to the value of marriage
  
3. **What are some ways parishes can become “marriage building parishes”?**  
*Each parish finds its own ways, but here is a sample:*
  - Offer “5 Love Languages” gathering for couples (a fun, but enlightening 2 hour program which helps couples begin to see their parish as a place for marriage support)
  - Include prayers for married couples often in General Intercessions at Mass
  - Begin a “For Your Marriage” section in the bulletin each week
  - Offer a “How to Pray Together as a Couple” session
  - Print Catholic Charities phone number in your bulletin & website and encourage hurting couples to get help
  - Advertise the U.S. Bishops’ marriage website: [www.ForYourMarriage.org](http://www.ForYourMarriage.org)
  - Offer a blessing to married couples at a parish mass
  - Hold a Mass and brunch for the widowed
  - Host a gathering for couples celebrating 5 & 10 year anniversaries
  
4. **How can a parish get started?**
  - Pastors can give the “green light” to “marriage teams” made up of married couples to take up the challenge of making their parish a marriage building parish
  - These “marriage teams” can make marriage more visible in their parish, so that couples see their parish as a resource for their marriage
  
5. **What are the “Becoming a Marriage Building Parish” networking sessions that the Family Life Office has been holding?**
  - A chance to network with people from other parishes about what can be done, resources available, best practices, etc.
  - Dates and locations are on diocesan website, see Family Life
  
6. **What advice do you have for people who want to get their parish involved in this initiative?**
  - Look at the conversation starters from [www.ajdiocese.org](http://www.ajdiocese.org) (See Family

Life) “Is Marriage the Invisible Sacrament in Your Parish?” and “Can Your Parish Help Prevent Divorce?”

- Then ask your pastor to form a “marriage team” and let the team take it from there. (Pastors are busy. It is married couples who need to take responsibility for promoting marriage because they live this Sacrament!)
- Attend a networking session
- Read the info on the Family Life pages of the diocesan website: [www.ajdiocese.org](http://www.ajdiocese.org)

**7. What help can the diocesan Family Life Office give my parish?**

- offer networking sessions in various regions of the diocese
- meet with pastoral councils, parish staffs, or marriage teams to help them begin
- serve as a clearing house for best practices
- share resources and ideas
- be available for advice
- bring programs to parishes at their request or mentor parishioners in offering them

**8. Who will benefit from this initiative?**

- all married and engaged couples
- happily married couples of any age
- hurting couples (The parish can offer them encouragement, support, resources.)
- separated/divorced (The parish learns to be sensitive to their pain and need for healing.)
- widowed (The parish honors their experience of marriage.)
- all of us in the church because strong marriages create a stronger church and society!