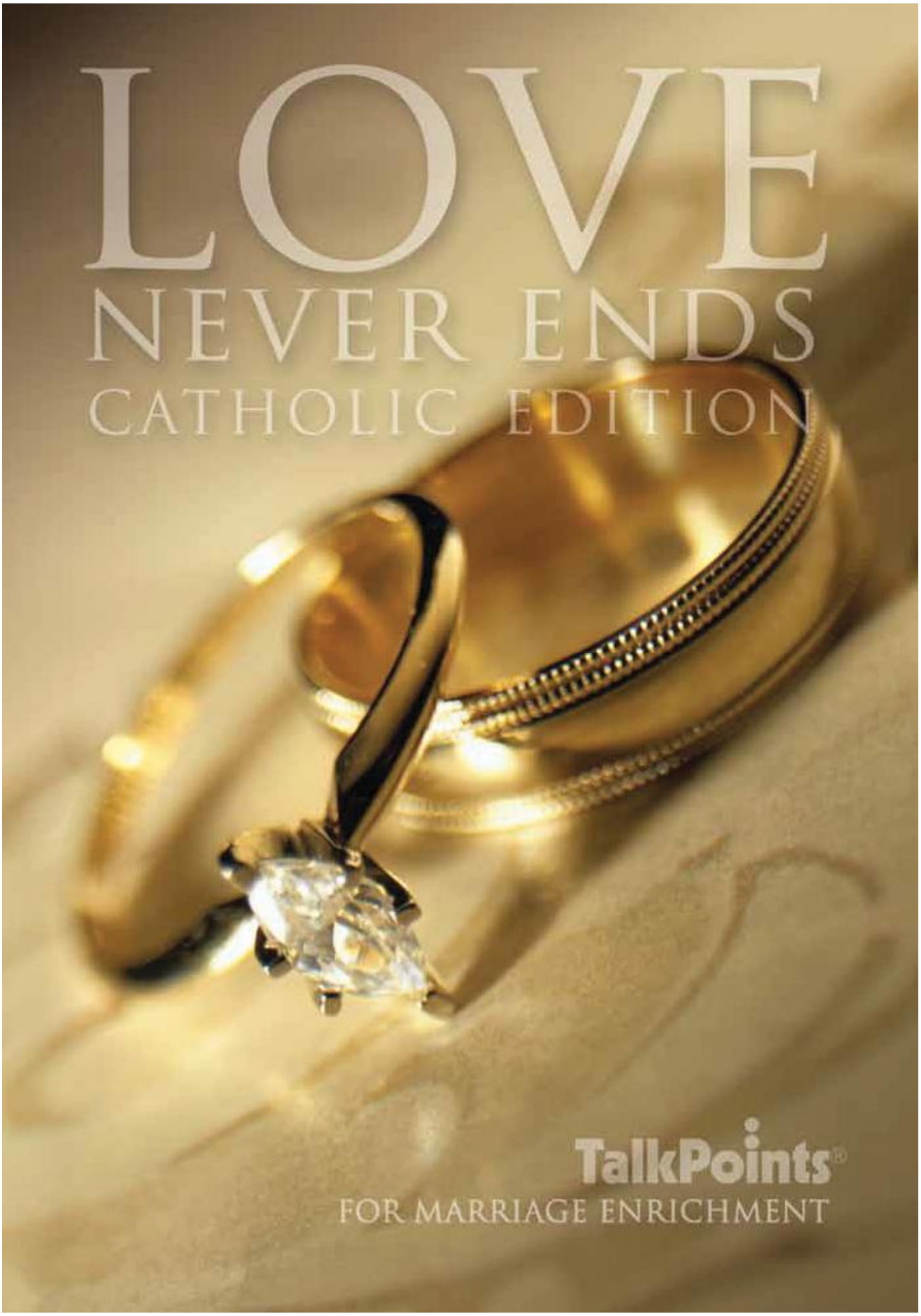
LOVE
NEVER ENDS
CATHOLIC EDITION
TalkPoints®
FOR MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

Introduction

Good communication is the soil in which your marriage will continue to flourish. Lifelong habits of open and effective communication will help you to re-connect often, deepen your understanding of each other, and help you to enjoy your relationship that much more. That's why this book was created. It offers an easy-to-use communication guide. Each talk sheet is duplicated, one is "His Copy" and one is "Her Copy." They are perforated for easy removal from the book. The book in itself provides a place to "file" the talk sheets when you have completed each conversation. To get started please review the overview of topics below, then turn to page 2 to begin the Introduction.

Contents

The Sacrament of Marriage 2-6
Our Marriage.....7-12
Remembering Our Parents.....13-18
Love and Intimacy 19-24
Balancing Leisure and Work.....25-30
Living Our Faith 31-36
Blessing Children 37-42
Managing Our Finances.....43-48
Doing My Part 49-54
Resolving Issues 55-60
Rules for Resolving Conflicts 61-62
Our Anniversary 63-68
Suggestions for Using this Resource 69-73

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www.talkpoints.com
Author: Rev. Dr. Frank Nelson
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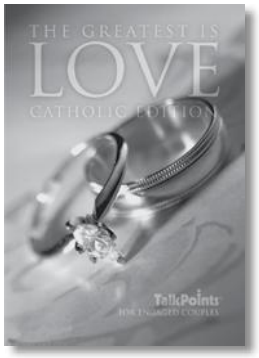
Also available for marriage preparation
The Greatest Is Love: Catholic Edition



The Sacrament of Marriage

Defining Marriage

Marriage is the intímate, exclusive, indisoluble communion of life and love entered by man and woman at the design of the Creator for the purpose of their own good and the procreation and education of children; this Covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament. (CCC, n. 1601, Can. 1055)

Marriage is an exclusive and lifelong union between a man and a woman, and expresses our God-given nature for male and female to become "one flesh." What is God's purpose for marriage? The first is the "unitive purpose," which describes the union of two lives to fulfill our human need for companionship and love. The second is the "procreative purpose" which describes the role of having and nurturing children within a family where they experience love, trust and faith.

Marriage is a supernatural institution elevated by Christ to be one of the sacraments when he participated in the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11). The Catholic Church teaches that the true marital union between two baptized Christians is the true sacrament of marriage.

What is a sacrament?

A "sacrament" is a sign of the sacred. Each of the seven sacraments is an outward sign of an inward reality expressing the presence and grace of God within and among us.

1. The Sacrament of Baptism
2. The Sacrament of Confirmation
3. The Sacrament of Holy Communion
4. The Sacrament of Confession (or reconciliation and the forgiveness of sins)
5. The Sacrament of Holy Orders (or ordination)
6. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick
7. The Sacrament of Marriage

Marriage is unique among the sacraments because the wife and husband are the "ministers" of the sacrament. The outward sign of the sacrament is the marriage contract itself expressed when each couple lives out the sacred vows they made to each other on their wedding day. As the wife and husband continue to be true to their promise of a faithful, lifelong marriage, the sacrament of marriage is being honored.

8 Our Marriage

Step 1. Introduction *(he reads outloud)*

When we speak words of appreciation, respect and love to each other, our sacred union is strengthened. Positive and loving communication is the soil in which our love helps us to choose, help, esteem and know each other more.

Step 2. Scripture *(she reads Genesis 2:21-24)*

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh ; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

Step 3. Quotation *(he reads)*

Marriage is a natural institution established by God the Creator. It is a permanent, faithful, fruitful partnership between one man and one woman, established by their free, mutual consent. It has two purposes: the good of the spouses, called the unitive purpose, and the procreation and education of children. (from MARRIAGE: LOVE AND LIFE IN THE DIVINE PLAN, A Pastoral Letter by the Catholic Bishops of the United States - Abridged Version)

Step 4. Reflection and Prayer *(in silence)*

Hold hands, close your eyes, and for 60 seconds, express gratitude for each other and offer this time of conversation to God.

Step 5. Journal *(separately and in silence)*

Remove the next two perforated pages from the book and write responses for both sides of the talk sheet.

Our Marriage

SIDE 1 HIS COPY

1. When we first met and started dating, I remember thinking that you were…

   During our engagement, I remember being thankful for…

2. Some of your best qualities include…

*	*
*	*
*	*
*	*

3. I appreciate the way you...

   I appreciate that you express your love for me by...

   I appreciate that you have been willing to...

   I appreciate that when I'm with you, I feel...

4. Some of the most enjoyable times we have had together as a couple include…

5. To say "I love you" means that I…

6. I'm thankful to God for giving you to me in marriage, because...

7. In our marriage I'm looking forward to…

Continue writing on Side 2…

8 Our Anniversary

A Conversation to Enjoy Every Year

Step 1. Introduction *(she reads)*

The seasons of love and life come and go, and with each passing year we discover new understandings about each other. Whether this is your first or fiftieth anniversary, this guided conversation helps you to give the precious gift of a loving conversation. Include this talk as a part of your anniversary traditions. As you celebrate each year of marriage, may you be grateful for the countless ways God continues to bless you and your marriage.

Step 2. Scripture *(he reads Matthew 19:3-6)*

Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all ?" And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

Step 3. Quotation *(she reads)*

When the baptized spouses exchange their promises of loving and permanent fidelity before the Church, their marriage covenant becomes a participation in the unbreakable covenant between Christ and the Church. The Holy Spirit binds the spouses together and enables them to perform acts of self-giving love to the benefit of themselves, their families, and the whole Church. In this way their marriage does more than symbolize Christ's love; it makes that love present in the world. (from MARRIAGE: LOVE AND LIFE IN THE DIVINE PLAN, A Pastoral Letter by the Catholic Bishops of the United States - Abridged Version)

Step 4. Reflection and Prayer *(in silence)*

Hold hands, close your eyes, and for 60 seconds, express gratitude for the past year of marriage. Seek God's continued guidance and blessing as you anticipate a new year.

Step 5. Journal *(in silence)*

Remove the next two pages from the book and complete both sides. Consider purchasing two blank books as your "Marriage Journals." Use the journals as a place to write responses to this and other conversations. Your "Marriage Journals" will become a written record of some of the highlights and milestones of your marriage journey.

Our Anniversary

SIDE 1 HIS COPY

As I reflect on our past year of marriage…

1. I continue to be thankful to you for the many day-by-day, ordinary, loving things you do, including (list)…
   * *
   * *
   * *
   * *

2. I'm also grateful that during the past year we have been able to take the time to…

3. Some of the challenges we faced together during the year included…
   * *
   * *
   * *

4. Some of our most enjoyable times were…
   * *
   * *
   * *

5. I felt especially close to you when…

6. I continue to be thankful to God for your many wonderful, personal qualities and abilities, including…
   * *
   * *
   * *
   * *

7. I'm thankful that we have the kind of relationship in which…

Continue writing on Side 2…

Suggestions for Using This Resource

The following suggestions are for those planning marriage enrichment programs for the church. TalkPoints help couples to communicate effectively by guiding them through a process of reading, writing, talking and listening (the four ways we communicate). With TalkPoints an atmosphere of love and understanding is always the result. *Love Never Ends: Catholic Edition* adds a new dimension of good communication to the events you plan for couples. It also makes a great gift for engaged couples planning to be married, especially if you have used *The Greatest Is Love: Catholic Edition* as a part of your marriage preparation strategy. Both are easy-to-use tools that will benefit couples for life.

SUGGESTION #1

A SINGLE 2-3 HOUR EVENT

Gather married couples for 2 – 3 hours of marriage enrichment.

1. Begin with a welcome and a brief time of worship.
2. Next, invite pairs of couples to get better acquainted by forming a small group of four. Ask the men to tell how they first met and their first date. Invite the women to tell about the proposal (if there was one) and a few of the details they remember about the wedding itself.
3. Distribute a copy of *Love Never Ends: Catholic Edition* to each couple. (Remember to provide pens/pencils and a place where couples can write.) Review the introductory pages on pages 2-6 by summarizing the meaning of the sacrament of marriage, introducing the idea of the communication bucket and going over the C.H.E.K. definition of love. Conclude with devotional thoughts about the three loves of Jesus on page 6 and a prayer.
4. Introduce the two-step communication process. Step One: Prepare for the conversation by reflecting and writing; Step Two: Come together to enjoy the conversation.
5. Next, invite couples to begin with the introduction for "Our Marriage" on page 8. Note the "he reads" and "she reads" prompts. After they have both finished writing on both Side One and Side Two, instruct couples to find a place anywhere in the church to have their conversation. Remind them of the importance of holding hands as they talk. There needs to be no time limit for their conversation, but it's a good idea to have a snack available for the couples as they return. Allow at least 45 minutes for couples to complete both the writing and talking.
6. Conclude the evening by encouraging couples to set aside a time once a week to create a "conversation date" utilizing the additional conversations in the book. Let them know about the last conversation, "Our Anniversary," and invite them to use this guided conversation as a gift of conversation each year to celebrate their anniversaries. They may want to purchase two blank "marriage journals" to record their responses, or you can provide each couple with two blank books as a gift.
7. Conclude the evening by thanking couples for taking the time to focus on their marriage. Suggest that they give each other a big hug. Offer a prayer of thanks to God for the wonderful sacrament of marriage.

SUGGESTION #2
TWO EVENINGS

Use the guideline for # 1 above, but at the end of your event, ask couples to choose four of the conversations in the book to complete on their own before having a second and final event in about a month. Encourage the couples to plan for a once-a-week date in order to complete the four conversations. Then, invite them to return for a second event, and during that event use the conversation, "Resolving Issues," as the topic for the evening. Ask them to be thinking about an issue or decision they need to talk about, and to come ready to learn how to use this tool in talking about their issue. During the second event, after the couples have completed their conversations, discuss the "Rules for Resolving Conflicts" on page 61. Next, invite couples to complete the activity on page 62. Finally, invite them to plan to include "Our Anniversary" as a part of their anniversary celebration year after year.

SUGGESTION #3
A SERIES OF ENRICHMENT "DATE NIGHTS"

Invite a group of couples to commit to a series of monthly dates for 7 – 9 months. Have the first night follow the agenda from Suggestion # 1 above. For subsequent dates couples can gather at the church or in a home for a brief introduction to the topic chosen for that evening. Begin with a time of worship related to the topic. You may want to invite a couple from the group to be prepared to share personal experiences and stories related to the topic. Next, couples read through the introductory page of the conversation, they fill out both sides of the talk sheet, and then find a place in the church, at a favorite restaurant or back home where they can enjoy their conversation in privacy.

SUGGESTION #4
AN ENRICHMENT RETREAT

The guided conversations in this book add a new dimension of dialogue to any marriage enrichment retreat format, whether you utilize one or several of the conversations during the outline of your retreat. The event can take place at the church, a retreat center or nearby hotel. It can be a daytime retreat involving most of a Saturday or Sunday, or it can be for an overnight or whole weekend. Some of the most helpful conversations to be sure to include during the course of the retreat include "Our Marriage," "Living Our Faith," and "Resolving Issues." Any of the other conversations are appropriate, too, except "Our Anniversary," which is intended as an annual conversation at the time of their anniversaries. In planning the schedule for the event allow for 45-60 minutes for each conversation you plan to use. For each of the topics covered you may want to begin with your own introduction and a testimony from one of the couples related to the topic. When the couples return from their conversations, take time to gather their comments and insights to the topic. This can be done in the large group or in small groups of 2-3 couples.

Continued on next page…

At the end of the retreat, encourage the couples to complete the other conversations from the book that were not covered during the retreat, with the exception of "Our Anniversary," an annual conversation couples can enjoy around the time of each of their anniversaries. Suggest that they purchase two blank books to be used as a "Marriage Journal," a place to record marriage milestones, as well as, their responses from the two conversations, "Resolving Issues" and "Our Anniversary."

SUGGESTION #5

A SMALL GROUP OF COUPLES

Invite a small group of 2-6 couples to meet for marriage enrichment in homes, the church, coffee shop or restaurant either weekly or monthly. A lead couple guides each of the gatherings, but the lead couple need not be the same each time. Begin the first small group meeting with a process similar to the one described in Suggestion # 1 above. Couples complete the writing and then have the conversation in a place where there is some measure of privacy. They return from their conversation for group discussion and the sharing of experiences and insights. For subsequent meetings choose a new topic and follow a similar format.

SUGGESTION #6

ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS WITH A PRIEST OR PASTORAL COUNSELOR

When a couple wishes to enrich their marriage with a priest or counselor, the guided conversations in this book work well. Plan to meet at least three times. Include the conversations, "Our Marriage," "Living Our Faith," and "Resolving Issues." Assign the other six conversations as homework to be completed by the couple, three before the second meeting and three before the third meeting.

SUGGESTION #7

SELF-GUIDED MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

Any couple who wishes to enrich their love and understanding can follow the simple outline of this book on their own.