



The Catholic Conference of Illinois (CCI) is the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Illinois. To further the work of CCI, the Defense of Marriage Department has created this *Toolkit on Marriage* to publicly articulate the Church's teachings regarding marriage. It offers and explains concepts key to Church teaching and provides the best resources available for understanding and defending marriage.

THE CONTENTS OF THE TOOLKIT

The primary purpose of this effort is to educate Catholics and facilitate their engagement in the vital public question being debated throughout our nation and our state: what is marriage? This toolkit is intended to help engage our faith community on this question and provide resources which illuminate this question with both an unflinching respect for the dignity of each and every person, as well as fidelity to what the Church teaches. To do so, the toolkit includes:

1. a Q & A on the topics most often discussed in this debate;
2. a list of the best resources for explaining Church teaching;
3. an outline and reflection guide for homilies and other catechetical efforts;
4. information on ministering to those with same-sex attraction; and
5. information about how to become more fully-involved in the public debate.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

The toolkit materials were prepared for clergy, parish staff and an informed laity. If Catholics are to defend marriage, their catechetical leaders, teachers, priests and deacons need to have reliable information to pass along. The defense of marriage will require the participation of all of us. It is essential that this question of marriage and what it means are taught to the faithful and engaged in by our parish communities.

Item one, the *Question and Answer*, addresses the issues typically encountered in the discussion about the redefinition of marriage. It is our judgment that the conversation about marriage, the assertions and counter-assertions, can be largely distilled into these twelve questions. The Church's answers to these commonly asked questions will help better inform the faithful and encourage their engagement in the issue. Committing to memory the concepts explained in the *Question and Answer* before any public engagement or catechesis takes place in the parish would be wise.

The *Best Resource List*, item two, is a reliable guide to more extensive explorations of what is presented in the *Question and Answer*. The resources are useful for informing the catechetical leader, as well as serving as a place to which the motivated parishioner might turn for more in-depth information. Further, the videos cited are quite "user-friendly" and are presented in non-technical language, thus making them suitable for school-aged children as well as for adult education.

Item three, *Reflections for Homilists and Catechists*, is offered to assist preachers, as well as catechists, who have an opportunity to address marriage issues publicly. This item provides a few suggestions for starting points, rather than complete talks. The suggestions are arranged thematically around the themes of the beauty of creation, covenantal love, alienation and respect for all individuals. It is different from the *Question and Answer* in that it is not intended as a working document, but rather as an aid to those who seek to preach or teach the Church's viewpoint on marriage.

Item four on the *Courage* ministry offers some resources for the pastoral care of persons who experience same-sex attractions.

Finally, item five invites everyone to become actively involved in the defense of marriage and provides a method for enlisting in the *Illinois Catholic Advocacy Network* (ICAN), coordinated by CCI. The challenges to marriage – social, legal and political – will not be overcome without broad and effective grassroots support. Your voice is needed!

In short, the Toolkit on Marriage is designed to help you and your parish communities understand, explain and promote the Catholic Church's answers to the following Questions:

1. What is marriage?
2. Why is the definition of marriage important?
3. Why does the Church endure the repercussions of taking a stance on marriage which is contrary to popular social trends and media advocacy?
4. And, most importantly, why should you care about marriage?

Please utilize these materials for catechetical efforts in your parish and for engaging your faith community in the public debate. Within the toolkit is a page listing members of CCI's Defense of Marriage Department. There is one member from each diocese. Please use these contacts to help implement this Toolkit. Department members are available to answer questions and give presentations. We desire nothing more than to help you make the case for marriage so that this unique and valuable institution may endure for the benefit of all children and future generations.

