

ONE IN CHRIST

The Path to Heaven through the Sacrament of Marriage



Over five years ago when I began the *One in Christ* Marriage Seminar with Fr. Paul Stein, we asked ourselves how we could effectively evangelize our culture that has become increasingly secular and hostile to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His message of salvation. With the support of His Eminence, Francis Cardinal George and the assistance of the Priest Advisory Board to the Respect Life Office in the Archdiocese of Chicago, we decided to create a program that would not only prepare engaged couples for the wonderful Sacrament of Marriage, but to re-evangelize fallen away and lukewarm Catholics so that they could experience a truly faith-deepening conversion and an awakening to the beauty, goodness and truth about marriage, family life and the Catholic Faith. We discovered that by evangelizing couples with the Gospel of Life, within the context of marriage preparation, couples come to appreciate the total value of human life transmitted through marriage.

The *One in Christ* Marriage Seminar provides priests, deacons, and lay facilitators with an all-inclusive and comprehensive Pre-Cana program, which is perfect for marriage preparation or weekend retreats. *One in Christ* presents both the sacramental theology and the practical “tools” of Christian Marriage so that couples reach an understanding of how marriage is a participation in the life of heaven and what that means for their lives together here on earth.

The seminar is ideal for engaged couples, those who are convalidating their marriage and couples who would like a refresher course on marriage. It is designed to be flexible. For example, it can be presented on an entire weekend or over a period of two to three weekends. It has also been used to prepare individual couples or couples in small groups.

The course takes the Hans Urs von Balthasar approach of presenting the truth, beauty and goodness of marriage and family life. This approach is very appealing to today’s couples, assaulted as they are by much secular negativity about marriage.

Our goal is not just to present information on marriage, but rather to help couples see the what, why and how of the Church’s teaching in relation to marriage. That is why we begin with the basic catechesis on the Catholic Faith and interweave it throughout the seminar. As a result, it becomes a catechesis reinvigorating the couples’ faith life within the context of marriage preparation.

Deeply rooted in Scripture, Catholic Tradition, the Lives of the Saints and Papal Encyclicals, this seminar will prepare couples to see the truth, beauty and goodness of marriage and family life. Couples will come to see how God and His grace are the remedies and the quintessential means to a happy, healthy, holy and lasting marriage.

This seminar includes a 280-page facilitator’s manual, a 270-page couple’s workbook, ten multimedia Microsoft® PowerPoint Presentations on a DVD and over fifteen videos. The books contain all the

speaker notes with the presentation goals, handouts, prayers, and articles on marriage. Note: (As a refresher course on marriage, married couples would simply purchase the Couple's Workbook. The DVD can be acquired by emailing Fr. Aschenbrener at fraschenbrener@aol.com.)

The videos for the Presentations include: *Growth in Christ, Forever One, Forgiveness, Prayer, Almsgiving and Tithing, In Sickness and in Health, Fasting, Large Families, Head and Heart, Words of Advice, The Unitive End of Marriage and Chastity, Facing Infertility: a Journey of Faith, Hope and Love*, and five videos on Natural Family Planning, *the Ovulation Method* and Contraception.

The Presentations include:

- ☞ Following Christ in the Vocation of Marriage
- ☞ Covenantal Theology and the Properties of Marriage
- ☞ Espoused Forever: The Sacraments of Marriage, Communion and Confession
- ☞ Covenantal Communication and the Moral Virtues
- ☞ Marriage and Money: Almsgiving and Tithing
- ☞ Covenantal Love: The Unitive End of Marriage
- ☞ Covenantal Life: The Procreative End of Marriage
- ☞ Contraception in Question
- ☞ Planning your Family God's Way: Natural Family Planning
- ☞ Facing Infertility: a Journey of Faith, Hope and Love (This talk also includes the Church's teaching on reproductive technologies).

We decided to name the seminar *One in Christ*, to emphasize the fundamental belief that it takes three to get married: husband, wife and God. In an age when beauty, truth and goodness are no longer valued as gifts from God and the self is placed at the center of universe, it is hoped that this program inspires couples to see that marriage is about seeking the goodness, integrity, holiness and salvation of the other: their spouse. As a result, couples come to discover that their vocation in marriage is to help each other get to Heaven.

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I hope that you find the *One in Christ* Marriage Seminar instructive, insightful and beneficial to the couples you will be preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Fr. Thomas Aschenbrener at fraschenbrener@aol.com. *One in Christ* can be purchased online at: www.cantius.org/go/webstore/product/one_in_christ_marriage_seminar