

Immigrant Access to Marriage

The Texas Catholic Conference *supports access to marriage for undocumented immigrants.*

Marriage is truly an instrument of salvation, not only for married people but for the whole of society. Like any truly worthwhile goal, it places demands upon us, it challenges us, it calls us to be prepared to sacrifice our own interests for the good of the other. It requires us to exercise tolerance and to offer forgiveness. It invites us to nurture and protect the gift of new life. Those of us fortunate enough to be born into a stable family discover there the first and most fundamental school for virtuous living and the qualities of good citizenship. I encourage all of you in your efforts to promote a proper understanding and appreciation of the inestimable good that marriage and family life offer to human society. *(Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience on May 5, 2010)*

A Texas Bishop Speaks:

"The vocation to marriage is a call from God. In the Catholic Church, this call is celebrated as a sacrament. It is unconstitutional for the state to prohibit access to the sacraments of the Church. Local and state policies and laws must not interfere with a couple's intention to enter into sacred matrimony."



-Bishop Michael Mulvey, Diocese of Corpus Christi

Church Teaching

- ★ States are called to *enact policies promoting the centrality and the integrity of the family* founded on marriage between a man and a woman, the primary vital cell of society, and to assume responsibility for its economic and fiscal needs, while respecting its essentially relational character. *(Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas In Veritate)*
- ★ Those who wish to marry and establish a family have the right to expect from society the moral, educational, social and economic conditions which will enable them to exercise their right to marry in all maturity and responsibility. The institutional value of marriage should be upheld by the public authorities; the situation of non-married couples must not be placed on the same level as marriage duly contracted. *(Charter of the Rights of the Family, presented by the Holy See to all persons, institutions and authorities concerned with the mission of the family in today's world October 22, 1983)*
- ★ The well-being of the individual person and of human and Christian society is intimately linked with the healthy condition of that community produced by marriage and family. Hence Christians and all men who hold this community in high esteem sincerely rejoice in the various ways by which men today find help in fostering this community of love and perfecting its life, and by which parents are assisted in their lofty calling. *(Pope Paul VI, Gaudium Et Spes)*
- ★ The consent by which the spouses mutually give and receive one another is sealed by God himself. From their covenant arises "an institution, confirmed by the divine law,... even in the eyes of society." *(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1639)*

Resources

- ★ **For Your Marriage** aims to convey the meaning and value of married life for the Church and for society. (www.ForYourMarriage.org or in Spanish www.PorTuMatrimonio.org)
- ★ **National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers (NACFLM)** strives to implement a vision of family ministry encompassing the entire life cycle. (www.NACFLM.org)
- ★ **Healthy Marriage Initiative** of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families. (www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage/)

The Texas Catholic Conference (TCC) is the association of the 15 Roman Catholic dioceses of the State of Texas, and is the Official Public Policy Voice of the Catholic Bishops of Texas.

Andrew Rivas, Executive Director • Jennifer Carr Allmon, Associate Director • Margaret McGettrick, Education Director

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Openness to life and the rights of the family must be reiterated in various contexts. The future of our societies rests on the encounter between peoples, on dialogue between cultures while respecting identities and legitimate differences. In this scenario, the family maintains its fundamental role. Thus the Church, by announcing the Gospel of Christ in all areas of life, carries forward her commitment 'not only in favor of the individual migrant, but also of his family, which is a place and resource of the culture of life and a factor for the integration of values'. (*Pope Benedict XVI, Plenary to the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples, May 2010*) Policies that prohibit the Church from celebrating the sacrament of marriage deny human persons the ability to fulfill their vocation from God and infringe upon the practice of religious freedom.

Benefits from Healthy Marriagesⁱ

Researchers have found many benefits for communities, children and youth, and men and women when they have a higher percentage of couples in healthy marriages, compared to unhealthy marriages, including the following:

Communities	Children and Youth	Women	Men
1. Higher rates of physically healthy citizens	1. More likely to attend college	1. More satisfying relationship	1. Live longer
2. Higher rates of educated citizens	2. More likely to succeed academically	2. Emotionally healthier	2. Physically healthier
3. Lower domestic violence rates	3. Physically healthier	3. Wealthier	3. Wealthier
4. Lower crime statistics	4. Emotionally healthier	4. Less likely to be victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or other violent crimes	4. Increase in the stability of employment
5. Lower teen age pregnancy rates	5. Less likely to attempt or commit suicide	5. Less likely to attempt or commit suicide	5. Higher wages
6. Lower rates of juvenile delinquency	6. Demonstrate less behavioral problems in school	6. Decrease risk of drug and alcohol abuse	6. Emotionally healthier
7. Higher rates of home ownership	7. Less likely to be a victim of physical or sexual abuse	7. Less likely to contract STD's	7. Decrease risk of drug and alcohol abuse
8. Higher property values	8. Less likely to abuse drugs or alcohol	8. Less likely to remain or end up in poverty	8. Have better relationships with their children
9. Decreased need for social services	9. Less likely to commit delinquent behaviors	9. Have better relationships with their children	9. More satisfying sexual relationship
	10. Have a better relationship with their mothers and fathers	10. Physically healthier	10. Less likely to commit violent crimes
	11. Decreases their chances of divorcing when they get married		11. Less likely to contract STD's
	12. Less likely to become pregnant as a teenager, or impregnate someone.		12. Less likely to attempt or commit suicide
	13. Less likely to be sexually active as teenagers		
	14. Less likely to contract STD's		
	15. Less likely to be raised in poverty		

Value of Traditional Marriage

There can be no doubt that the rise of non-marital cohabitation in modern nations has seriously weakened the institution of marriage, and strongly contributed to substantial and continuing increases in unwed births and lone-parent families. This means, in turn, that more and more children are growing up in families that do not include their two biological parents. The reason this is a serious problem is because all the evidence we have shows that individuals fare best, both in childhood and in later life, when they benefit from the economic and emotional investments of their natural parents who reside together continuously and cooperate in raising them.ⁱⁱ

(Last updated August 3, 2010, 82nd Legislative Session)

ⁱ "ACF Healthy Marriage Initiative." *Administration for Children and Families Home Page*. Web. 02 Aug. 2010. <www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage/about/mission.html#background>.

ⁱⁱ Popenoe, David. "Cohabitation, Marriage, and Child Wellbeing A Cross-National Perspective." *The National Marriage Project*. Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2009. Web. 2 Aug. 2010. <marriage.rutgers.edu>.