

If You Are Cohabiting

Couples who cohabit and approach the Church to be married are seeking something more profound and deeper in their relationship and want to respond to that inner, spiritual yearning:

The Church encourages you to:

- use this period of anticipation to express intimacy in a non-sexual manner.
- put your spouse's well-being above your own.
- commit *all* of yourselves to one another – bodies, pleasure, thoughts, hopes, dreams, fears, failings, plans, difficulties, bank accounts, bad moods, in-laws, etc. in the self-giving covenant of love
- prepare for a Christian marriage by living a Christian lifestyle with participation in the Sunday eucharistic celebration, the sacraments, prayer, works of justice, charity and chastity as a life lived in Christ.

Questions for Discussion

Why did you originally choose to live together?

How does the commitment you wish to make now differ from the commitment you made when you decided to cohabit?

How has your relationship changed over the time that you have lived together?

What have you learned from your experience of living together?

What are your reasons for wanting to marry at this time?

Why do you want to be married in the Catholic Church at this time?

How do you think your relationship will change after you are married?

What does the sacrament of marriage mean to you?

What do you think will be a challenge for you in a lifelong marriage?

Choosing to Live Together

In Faithful Love To Each Other In Marriage

Why Cohabit?

An increasing number of couples are living together in a sexual relationship when not married. Approximately half of all first marriages are preceded by cohabitation.

The declining significance of marriage as the center of family life has been attributed to a growing secularization and individualization in first world cultures. Aversion to long term commitments is one of the identifying traits of these trends and a major reason for cohabitation.

Personal Reasons for Cohabitation

- fear or disbelief in long-term commitment
- a desire to test the relationship
- loneliness
- economic security
- independence
- avoid divorce
- social norm for social success and proof of adult transition
- escape from home, “rite of passage”

Reasons for choosing cohabitation are usually mixed: cohabitation may be in equal parts an alternative to marriage and an attempt to prepare for marriage.

What are the Risks?

Less than half of cohabiting couples ever marry.

40% of cohabiting households include children, either the children of the relationship or the children that one or both partners bring to the relationship.

Median duration of cohabitation is 1.3 years.

Women are likely to cohabit only once and that with the person they subsequently marry; men are more likely to cohabit with a series of partners.

Individuals, especially women, who experienced disruption in their parents’ marriage are more likely to cohabit than those who had parents with stable marriages

Divorce rate is higher for people who cohabit with no prior commitment to marry.

Cohabitors value independence and economic equality; whereas, married persons generally value interdependence and the exchange of resources.

Domestic violence is a more common problem with cohabitators than with married persons.

Cohabitors who marry are less effective at conflict resolution than those who did not cohabit.

Catholic Vision of Marriage

- Living together in marriage is a covenant of love, a relationship of unconditional love in giving oneself wholly and responsibly to each other. No conditions are placed on the love shared between each other.
- Living together in marriage is to give oneself physically to each other in a lifelong union.
- Living together in marriage is a lifelong commitment of love in fidelity to each other.
- Living together in marriage is a sacrament, a sign that Christ is truly present in the shared giving and loving of each other.
- Living together in marriage is a lifetime commitment to the child(ren) fostering stability and security within family life.

Welcome to our Catholic Christian community

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