

## PROGRAM GUIDE

# THE VIRTUES

## A Program for Couples

*“As a couple grows in virtue, they grow in holiness.”  
(Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan, p. 46)*

*“Moderation and prudence, justice and fortitude,  
and nothing in life is more useful than these.” (Wisdom 8:5-7)*

Dear Family Life Minister,

Through our previous programs: **SIX DATES for Catholic Couples**, and **The Beatitudes: A Couple’s Path to Greater Joy**, we invited couples to remember how their relationship started: how they met, what attracted them to each other, what keeps them together, and to reflect on their relationship with God. In the present program, **The Virtues**, we invite spouses to consider the importance of those key habits that help them grow and mature as persons: The Cardinal Virtues – **Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance**.

The virtues are necessary in marriage. Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance guide spouses in making wise decisions, and in treating each other fairly. They help husband and wife find the strength to face difficult moments, and to use self-control to manage their emotions and desires. On the other hand, imagine what a couple’s life would be like if the spouses lacked prudence, were unfair, lacked courage, and self-control. The marriage would not last.

With this program we want to remind couples of those good habits that lead to personal maturity and to a great marriage.

*“Human virtues are stable dispositions of the intellect and the will that govern our acts, order our passions, and guide our conduct in accordance with reason and faith.” (CCC1834)*

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## **The VIRTUES: A Program for Couples**

Parishes told us that couples attending SIX DATES for Catholic Couples and The Beatitudes value their private time, but also want the opportunity to spend time with other couples.

**The Virtues** is designed to be used in a variety of settings and can accommodate both: private time between husband and wife and social time with other couples.

## **1. The Materials Found on the DVD and Downloadable from our Website:**

The parish packet will contain:

- a. A downloadable Program Coordinator's Guide
- b. Six downloadable flyers (in PDF format, in color and in black and white)
- c. Four videos on the Virtues and three Resurrection Stories, available on the DVD and through YouTube.com to facilitate the posting of the videos on the parish website. Find the YouTube links on the last page of this document.
- d. Downloadable sample of bulletin announcements.
- e. Downloadable outline of a 4 hours retreat.

NOTE: Find on the last page of this document the directions for downloading the above materials from the DVD. The downloadable materials are also available on our website: [www.happy-together.net](http://www.happy-together.net).

## **The Flyers**

There are six flyers. The "Introduction" flyer can be used to introduce the program. It explains the program and invites couples to participate. The rest of the flyers are used as handouts during the planned activities. Among the flyers we have included one titled: "Helpful Steps in Sharing your Feelings with Each Other." This flyer was added to give couples a tool they can use in their conversations. Often when we talk about habits we find that we have differences. This tool guides spouses in dealing with their differences. Give a copy of this flyer to the couples before each date or gathering.

## **The Videos**

Each of the four videos presents one of the four Cardinal Virtues. Through interviews with 20 couples the videos give examples of how spouses practice the virtues in their day-to-day life.

## **THE FOUR TOPICS EXPLORED**

### **1: Prudence – The Habit of Making Wise Decisions**

The video and the flyer introduce the Cardinal Virtues as those habits that every person needs in order to succeed in life. Prudence is the first of these virtues, and the program reminds us of the steps we need to take to make a prudent decision. The couples interviewed in the video share how they make prudent decisions, for example: when they use the Internet, when they drive a car, when they manage their money, or when they relate to friends and coworkers. The couples also share how their faith helps them choose right from wrong, and gives them the strength to do what is right.

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## **2: Justice – The Source of Harmony and Peace in our Homes**

The video and the flyer turn to the Catechism in search of an answer to the question: What is justice? The program examines how justice is practiced in the family: between husband and wife, between parents and children, and between adult children and their parents. The couples interviewed in the video answer such questions as: What did you learn from your parents' marriage? What do parents owe their children out of justice? And, out of justice, what do adult children owe their parents?

## **3: Courage – The Strength to Live Our Vocation**

Jesus told his disciples: "Take courage...Do not be afraid." (Mt 14:27) Fortitude is the virtue that gives us the strength to conquer fear and to persevere in the pursuit of what is right. The video and the flyer examine fortitude as the strength that helps us live our vocation as spouses and as parents. It takes courage to marry and to stay married, and it takes courage to be parents. The couples interviewed reflect on such questions as: what have been the moments in our marriage when we have needed courage the most? What are the times when we have been most afraid for our children, and we needed courage? And, how does our faith help us find the courage we need?

## **4: Temperance – The Virtue of Self-Control and Moderation**

The video and the flyer invite us to reflect on the fact that we all have desires; desires are good, but indulging our desires without limits is harmful to us. Temperance is the virtue of self-control and moderation. The video tells the story of two couples who overcame addictions: one to alcohol, the other to pornography. The couples interviewed reflect on the virtue of chastity and what it means to them. They also explain how they teach their children and teens the virtue of chastity. At the end of the video the couples interviewed answer the question: where do I find the strength to resist temptations?

### **Resurrection stories**

In filming the videos we came across stories of success in overcoming obstacles in marriage. We thought that some couples might find them helpful and we decided to include them on the DVD as additional resources for parishes. They are:

- Overcoming Infidelity
- Overcoming Pornography Addiction
- Overcoming Alcohol Addiction

## **2. HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM**

Drawing from our experiences of parish ministry, we realize that programs are easier to implement when we are given a road map to guide us. Each parish may choose a different path, but many appreciate having a point of reference to guide their planning. Before you start your planning, ensure that you have the full support of your pastor. You may want to

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discuss with him the various options for using this program and listen to his suggestion. Below find four options for implementing this program.

### **Option 1: Four Dates for Catholic Couples** (a date night program)

If your parish wants to offer a program that is appealing to couples and is easy to implement, consider holding a date night program. This program can be scheduled over four consecutive weeks, or once a month for four months, or any other interval the parish desires. This option may be appealing especially if the parish has previously used SIX DATES for Catholic Couples, or the Beatitudes.

All married couples want to go on dates, but often life gets in the way. Hearing that the parish encourages them to go on dates, and that their friends are also going, it can prompt spouses to attend, especially if childcare is provided, and the cost is minimal.

Each date can be structured as follows:

1. Opening prayer and an Introduction of the theme (8 – 10 minutes). Use some of the thoughts from one of the flyers to introduce the theme of the evening.
2. Show one of the four videos on the virtues (10 minutes). After showing the video give each couple a copy of the flyer that corresponds to the video, and a copy of “Helpful Steps in Sharing your Feelings with Each Other.”
3. Couple time – couples are dismissed to go on their own date away from the parish premises.

This option will provide a lot of private couple time, but little social time with other couples. The date night program is the easiest to implement requiring mostly a strong campaign to promote the program and to launch it. However, if the parish wishes to provide a greater balance of private couple time and social time, consider option 2.

### **Option 2: Grow Your Marriage With The Virtues** (Four Marriage Enrichment Gatherings)

Parishes are looking for opportunities to bring married couples together in order to provide inspiration and support for them. The materials of The Virtues program can be used for such purpose.

It can be used as a series of 4 weekly gatherings or 4 monthly gatherings. Each gathering can be structured as follows:

1. Opening prayer and an Introduction of the theme (8 – 10 minutes). Use some of the thoughts from the flyer to introduce the theme of the evening.
2. Show one of the four videos on the virtues (10 minutes). After showing the video give each couple a copy of the flyer that corresponds to the video, and a copy of “Helpful Steps in Sharing your Feelings with Each Other.”
3. Couple time – Allow spouses to spend 15 to 20 minutes in private conversation using the questions listed on the flyer. Give them space for privacy.
4. Group sharing about key points identified in the video and in the flyer (20 minutes). Use some of the questions on the flyer to start up the group sharing.
5. Social time – this can be entertainment, games, or sharing food in a relaxed environment.

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Each parish can adapt this schedule according to what works best in their community. Some may start with a potluck dinner, and provide childcare. This option requires planning not only to promote the events, but also to organize and decide how each event will be structured and who will lead what portion of it.

### **Option 3: Grow Your Marriage With The Virtues - A Short Retreat for Busy Couples**

In most parishes there are couples that would welcome some quiet time to reflect on how to grow in their relationship and to grow spiritually. We have created an outline for the retreat, which can be downloaded from the DVD or from our website: [www.happy-together.net](http://www.happy-together.net). The retreat can last about 4 hours, a time manageable for many couples. Ideally the parish will offer childcare.

### **Option 4: Parish-wide Marriage Enrichment Campaign**

This option is used when the parish wants to offer the program as a tool for parish-wide marriage enrichment. In this case the parish offers one of the options 1, 2, and 3 listed above, and in addition it reaches out to as many couples as possible with a catechesis on the Cardinal Virtues using the flyers as inserts in the parish bulletin and linking the videos on the virtues to the parish website.

#### **Possible ways for outreach:**

- Insert the flyers in the parish bulletin for 4 consecutive weeks, or once a month for four months.
- Post the flyers on the parish website, parish app, Facebook page, or other social media tool.
- Send copies of the flyers to all the families registered in the parish via e-mail, or hard copy.
- Post the videos on the parish website.
- See that the flyers reach the families of the children attending Religious Education and the Catholic School.

This options requires a well organized campaign led by a team that is willing to consider all means to reach as many couples as possible in the parish and surrounding community.

*"Given the pace of life today, most couples cannot attend frequent meetings; still, we cannot restrict our pastoral outreach to small and select groups. Nowadays, pastoral care for families has to be fundamentally missionary, going out to where people are."*

*Amoris Laetitia #230*

### **3 Four suggestions for a successful implementation:**

1. Plan months and weeks ahead
2. Involve as many people as possible in the planning
3. Use all opportunities available to promote the program.
4. Find several parish organizations to co-sponsor these events.

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### How to Print the Program Materials from the DVD

1. Place the DVD in the computer Disk Drive.
2. The program will start. Close it.
3. PC Users: go to “My Computer” and right-click the DVD icon. Choose “Explore” – you will find folders with all the materials.
4. Mac Users, go to “Finder” and click on the DVD icon. You will find folders with all the materials.
5. Open the document you need and print it.

Your parish has the permission to reproduce all the materials found on the DVD.

If you find it difficult to print the materials from the DVD, please go to: [www.happy-together.net](http://www.happy-together.net) and click on the tab “The Virtues.” All the materials are available there for you to download.

### LINKING THE VIDEOS TO YOUR WEBSITE OR FACEBOOK PAGE

You can link the videos of this program to your website using the following links.

The VIRTUES – trailer 1 – <https://youtu.be/n55NC6lIHQI>

The Virtues – trailer 2 - <https://youtu.be/H9RAZ2GXU9g>

**PRUDENCE:** The Habit of Making Wise Decisions - <https://youtu.be/cRldAW2Y4IA>

**JUSTICE:** The Source of Harmony and Peace in our Homes - <https://youtu.be/-ibcVoYEQs0>

**COURAGE:** The Strength to Live our Vocation - <https://youtu.be/h5Eq00MifIA>

**TEMPERANCE:** The Virtue of Self-Control and Moderation - <https://youtu.be/PQVqorX1Uco>

### Redemption Stories

Overcoming Infidelity - <https://youtu.be/sMMQVFRSsXk>

Overcoming Pornography Addiction - <https://youtu.be/ZhIrlgSM9JA>

Overcoming Alcohol Addiction - <https://youtu.be/KgjPmr57voE>