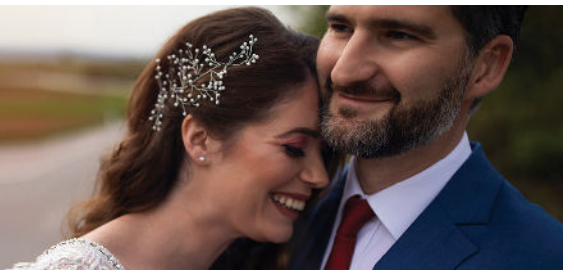




NATIONAL MARRIAGE WEEK

Man and Woman He Created Them:

**TOGETHER**  
*with purpose*



# National Marriage Week 2026

## At-Home Retreat

### Man and Woman, He Created Them: Together With Purpose

#### Stephanie Calis Prelude

In seven days, the Lord created. Are you ready to spend the next seven days becoming a new creation of your own?

*“In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”*<sup>1</sup> Have you ever considered how the creation and first marriage of man and woman offers a blueprint for your own marriage—even thousands of generations later?

Of course, the perfection of love Adam and Eve experienced in the garden was impermanent, with sin entering into creation. Yet, God’s merciful love endures. That’s the core of this weeklong retreat: a closer look at the meaning and purpose of marriage and the Lord’s abiding presence.

Each day, you’ll reflect on the nature of your roles as spouses and on the gifts and purpose of your call to marriage, with highlights from Pope Francis’ *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love). Set aside a time and location to read the daily reflections for this retreat with your spouse, each followed by discussion questions, an action step, and a prayer



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intended to draw you back to the One with whom it all began.

I know that in my own busy, too-quickly distracted life, it’s embarrassingly easy to lose sight of the things I *say* I prioritize—namely, my spiritual life, my marriage, and my family. Although I value these things to my core, my actions don’t always align as frequently as I intend: I scroll on my phone; I treat important matters as interruptions to what I feel like doing; I fall into taking my relationship with my husband for granted. If you can relate, my hope for you this week is a re-centering and *re-turn*, a change in your posture and disposition, toward the Lord, who rejoices in our reliance on Him and desires to bring forth such abundant fruit from every Christian marriage. I’ll be here alongside you, and more importantly, so will He.

Ready?

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<sup>1</sup> [Genesis 1:27](#).

# Day One: Man and Woman He Created Them

As you begin this week of reflection, consider the two parts of this retreat's title.

First, consider the Lord as Creator: "Man and Woman He Created Them."<sup>2</sup> God created the first man and woman specifically for one another, inviting them into a perfection of love that was given and received in total freedom, without shame or lust or sin. Even after the fall, His loving mercy brought about the redemption of sin: the Cross and Resurrection open for all of us the gates of heaven, a return to the garden at the eternal wedding banquet.

Second, consider the *why* of your marriage: this retreat's theme is "Together with Purpose."

Remembering your faith formation classes growing up might remind you that Christian marriage "is ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring."<sup>3</sup>

What does this identity of your creation, and this purpose of your marriage, look like in your everyday life? What is the Father specifically calling you to do with your vocation?

I love contemplating His providential hand when I remember that, just as in Genesis, the Lord created my husband and me exactly as we are and willed that we each find such a well-suited beloved in the other. We are inheritors of the mission entrusted to all Christian spouses and we will live out this mission in the unique way only we can.

As you read this, call to mind a couple whose marriage you admire, and why. Is there a particular element that seems to make their marriage "work?" Chances are, at least one aspect of their successful marriage has to do with a sense of balance and complementarity; that is, each spouse drawing out the best qualities in the other and exhibiting individual strengths that support them both as a couple. "If one partner clearly recognizes

the other's weak points, he or she needs to have a realistic trust in the possibility of helping to develop the good points that counterbalance them, and in this way to foster their human growth."<sup>4</sup>

Honestly, I get annoyed with myself when I dwell on my weaknesses. I know, though, that annoyance isn't the healthiest response! I *should* think about my weaknesses so I can work on overcoming them! These reflections involve a recognition of my natural disposition, but with a refusal to resign myself to areas where I struggle or to think that my bad habits are "just how I am." The graces of sacramental marriage are real, not just figurative, and can offer you strength and resolve to grow for the better.

As I struggle through this growth, I'm grateful for the ways my husband and I balance various aspects of each other's personalities. He is decisive and quick to act, for instance, while I tend to more slowly think and process before reacting. This difference in our personalities has affected everything from when we should start dinner each night to learning to care for our newborn children. Without his sense of urgency to complement my sense of placidity, I'm aware we could veer too close to impulsiveness or indolence rather than a more balanced way of meeting our family's needs.

Today, delve into your own specifics of who you and your spouse are. Think—and think deeply! -- about the awe-inspiring fact that God has called you to each other. What particular qualities do you each possess that balance the other? In what ways are you alike, and in what ways has He given you a helpmate who has the strengths and abilities that you don't have yourself? In His goodness, He equips you as spouses for a distinctive way of living out your marriage vows.

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<sup>2</sup> [Genesis 1:27](#).

<sup>3</sup> [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), 1601.

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<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), Apostolic Exhortation, 2016, §210.

*For discussion:*

Of whom did you think when you read the passage above about a couple whose marriage you admire? What would you like to emulate in your own marriage?

*For action:*

Take a few minutes to list 5-10 qualities your spouse has that you are grateful for. Gratitude and appreciation are powerful! Write them down, share your lists, and say “thank you for being \_\_\_\_\_” to one another aloud.

*Pray:*

Heavenly Father, we thank you for creating each of us as the persons we are and for calling us to marriage. As we begin this week of retreat, may we be continually aware of your providence in our lives, and the ways we complement one another as husband and wife. Holy Spirit, open our eyes and ears to your movements and to the purpose of our marriage, ready to let our hearts be stirred, pierced, and renewed.

## Day Two: The Relief of Our Solitude

Yesterday, you reflected on the specific nature of who you and your spouse are to one another, living out a sacred call to love and growing in awareness of the ways you complement each other as husband and wife. Today, consider how that sense of awareness goes even deeper, for in marriage you aren’t alone. It’s a reassurance that earthly and divine love answers our deepest loneliness, just as the Creator intended.

At last. “This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”<sup>5</sup>

Consider the early days of your relationship. Was there a moment of recognition where you thought, *this could be it*? Clarity, admiration, certainty. Maybe it felt like a lightning strike, or maybe it was a quieter inclination that this person could become your

husband or wife.

Whether you’ve been married two years or two decades, I hope recalling that moment brings with it a sense of joy and gratitude. Recalling your own experience can illuminate a hint of what Adam felt in the garden the first time he beheld his wife, Eve: a sense that no one so suitable has existed before or since, in a breathtakingly specific manner.

I burst into tears every time I watch the scene in Disney and Pixar’s *Wall-E* where our robot hero, alone on a desolate future imagining of planet Earth, first sees a robot like himself. Aptly, her name is Eve. The music swells and Wall-E stops, drawn in by her presence. He is no longer the only one of his kind; there is another. Later in the movie, Wall-E and Eve fall in love and bring a tiny sprout of a plant, the first living thing in decades, to Earth—the start of life anew.

Have you experienced this sense of likeness in one another; a feeling of discovery and recognition?

Every vocation, by God’s design, affirms that the human person was never meant to be alone—never estranged from His fatherly love, and not without others to accompany us on our earthly pilgrimage. The movie, of course, echoes Genesis. Pope Francis writes that Adam’s first encounter with Eve “relieves man’s solitude” and brings forth new life.<sup>6</sup> “The original Hebrew suggests a direct encounter, face to face, eye to eye, in a kind of silent dialogue, for where love is concerned, silence is always more eloquent than words.”<sup>7</sup>

Solitude is quiet in its own way. When you are physically alone or have been single in the past, maybe you’ve felt a restlessness, as if there are parts of yourself that stay muted or unshared. There’s a beauty to the idea that even in communion—the opposite of solitude—silence and quiet still exist, this time with the weight of peaceful, mutual understanding. In relationship with Christ, the Bridegroom, and with our spouses, we’re called to both silent and spoken dialogue. In the presence

<sup>6</sup> Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* §13.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, §12.

<sup>5</sup> [Genesis 2:23](#).

of holy silence, a sense of fascination with the beloved, and a deeper closeness, can take root. It's a closeness we're created for.

*For discussion:*

Today, consider your earliest experiences of one another. Was there a specific moment where you experienced an at last feeling of certainty in your call to marry each other? How and when did you sense God prompting you toward one another?

*For action:*

Pope Francis' above words about the "eloquence" of silence recall the 1997 study wherein participants were paired with a stranger and given a set of 36 questions to ask and answer, culminating in four minutes of silent eye contact.<sup>8</sup> Many partners reported feelings of trust, closeness, and understanding at the conclusion of their time. Try it yourselves! Set a timer and gaze at one another for four minutes (it's okay if it feels silly—let yourselves be surprised!). Share your experience once time is up.

For an additional challenge, try this exercise in prayer, with the One whose love is unceasing: next time you arrive early for Mass, gaze upon the altar or tabernacle as an anchor, and be still and silent before the Lord for four minutes. If your thoughts wander, acknowledge and let them pass through your mind, then return your gaze to its anchor. Does prayer feel different when you're just listening and receiving, rather than speaking to God? What does He want to reveal to you?

*Pray:*

Lord, we know that in your presence we are never alone. Thank you for your ever-present love. Grant that we grow closer as spouses, in conversation and in quiet, while bringing you glory and growing closer to your love.

## Day Three: Lifelong Sharing and Friendship

The first two days of this retreat emphasized the unrepeatable, singular nature of you and your spouse: how you were each created to complement the other, and how the discovery of one so well-suited to you answers a deep human longing. That relief of solitude in marriage echoes a still greater reality: God, the Creator, loves every person unceasingly and fulfills every ache of our hearts.

Today, in gratitude and deeper awareness of the ways your spouse balances you, delights you, and draws out your best, consider that thinkers from Aquinas to Aristotle to Augustine have all expressed the idea that romantic love is one of the greatest forms of friendship.<sup>9</sup>

My hope as you read this is that you and your spouse like and enjoy each other and count one another among your most cherished friends. When I recall meeting my husband, I smile when I remember the feeling that I could talk to him forever; endlessly curious about his ideas, tastes, and stories. He spoke freely and beautifully about his faith. We laughed more easily than I ever had with anyone else and were filled with a mutual sense of fascination and wonder as we grew in friendship. The fact that we were also so emotionally and physically attracted to each other, that we could find such a counterpart in another person, felt like a true gift.

What about you? Today, take time to zero in on some defining aspects of your own marital friendship and how you can nurture them. To get your thoughts rolling, consider the qualities you most value in a friend—perhaps loyalty, accountability, a great sense of humor, or a knack for making the best, most adventurous plans. Do these qualities overlap with any of the traits you most admire in your spouse?

<sup>8</sup> Cf. New York Times, "36 Questions: How to Fall in Love." [36questionsinlove.com](http://36questionsinlove.com).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* §123.



It's valuable to identify the unique aspects of the friendship you share, because when you can name the traits and habits that bring meaning to your relationship, you have a concrete foundation to return to through the decades. Remembering your friendship, and refocusing your energy toward it, is a worthy effort that lets your love continually grow. During busy seasons of life or at times when the daily demands of work and family start to feel humdrum, you can actually say, "let's get our attention back to [an aspect of your friendship]."

What if your friendship feels strained right now, due to circumstances, stress, or apathy? Entrust it to the Lord and ask the Holy Spirit for the resolve to make just one move back toward your foundation. If, for instance, a major part of your friendship involves laughing together, send your spouse a video you know will crack them up today or pick out a show to watch tonight. If a particular mode of prayer (Adoration, worship music, the Rosary, reading Scripture) was instrumental as you got to know one another, commit to praying together before the end of the day. Ultimately, the actions we choose each day make up a lifetime—what do you want your actions to say, and what fruits do you hope they bear? Aided by grace and bolstered by familiarity and affection, your marriage can come to embody "all the traits of a good friendship: concern for the good of the other, reciprocity, intimacy, warmth, stability and the resemblance born of a shared life."<sup>10</sup>

#### *For discussion:*

What qualities initially drew you to your spouse? What experiences and events have changed the nature of your friendship over the course of your time together?

#### *For action:*

Prioritize each other and your friendship! Plan a date night. Maybe it's nostalgic, recalling fun experiences or activities you've loved in the past,

or maybe it'll be a new undertaking you've been meaning to try.

#### *Pray:*

Father, we pray in thanksgiving for one another. Grant us the graces of honesty, intimacy, and clarity, that we might grow in holy friendship and self-gift. Awaken in us a renewed delight in one another, trusting that our good humor and joy delight you, in your goodness.

## Day Four: A Community of Life and Love

You've spent the past few days taking an up-close look at your marriage, contemplating the gift of your spouse and what each of you brings to your friendship and marriage. Today, you'll examine the nature of your marriage and family as a community, and how that community functions within your household and within the world.

The Second Vatican Council wrote at length on the role of the Church in the modern world, and called marriage "a community of life and love."<sup>11</sup> Pope Francis pointed out that this document placed "love at the center of the family" and taught that "'True love between husband and wife' involves mutual self-giving, includes and integrates the sexual and affective dimensions, in accordance with God's plan."<sup>12</sup>

To appreciate this description of the nature of marriage, consider why and how any community functions. A community exists to meet human persons' biological and emotional needs for safety, social order, support, belonging, and relationship. As members of a community, we feel a sense of purpose and responsibility for others outside of ourselves. The community successfully operates when members abide by its spoken and unspoken social codes, but especially when its members act in freedom—that is, using their free will to choose what is good.

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<sup>11</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World §48.

<sup>12</sup> Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* §67.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Spend some time reflecting today: what is each individual's role in the community of your marriage and family life (e.g. husband, wife, parent, child)? Consider the uniqueness of each person and how each fulfills his or her role in a way that can't be duplicated. While some of these roles might be practical, in the sense of income or protection, think as well about the strengths and abilities of your spouse and any children you have. Perhaps one of you is a spiritual anchor; one of you brings a sense of joy and lightness; one of you offers sensitivity and insight. The Lord grants these gifts so you might each sanctify each other and, in doing so, bear witness to His goodness in the world.

As you contemplate the immediate community within your marriage, consider the larger community you fit into at work, church, school, and with friends and extended family. In all the ways you are community members, ask yourselves how you're living out the purpose of marriage as an emblem of "life and love." Specifically, what are your highest values? Do your habits and actions reflect these values in your personal and public community lives?

If your faith is a top value, for instance, take stock of ways your choices reflect—or don't reflect—that value. When I notice myself skipping past the daily Mass readings in my inbox at breakfast in favor of the ever-inviting Insta-scroll, I know I need to muster the will to re-evaluate my choices. What about the values of time together with your spouse or long-term financial goals?

It takes effort and integrity to align your actions with your values. Each time you do—individually, as a couple, and as a family—you put love and self-giving, and the good of your communities, at the center of your marriage.

*For discussion:*

For each member in the personal community of your marriage (each spouse, any children), list his or her gifts and needs. How can you embody the love of God to each person in a way that's

personally meaningful to him or her?

*For action:*

Identify 3-4 highest values in your life together, then choose one value you'd like to bring more to the forefront, not just in word but in action. What specific practices will you employ to live out the fact that this value is a priority for you?

*Pray:*

We thank you, Lord, for the communities in which our marriage takes part. Above all, we thank you for our identity as your son and daughter, baptized into your human family. Speak words of mission and purpose into our hearts today, inviting us to more fully become who you made us to be and so embody your love to all those we encounter.

## Day Five: Christ Dwells With You

What have you been feeling as this week of retreat progresses? For me, periods of reflection often result in a slew of new goals and resolutions. If you're experiencing something similar as you've examined your marriage and spiritual lives this week, great! Don't lose sight, though, of what gives those resolutions meaning—that is, the good and purpose of your marriage.

As spouses, you are together with a purpose: to sanctify one another and bring about God's glory in this life, so that you might lead each other to the heavenly banquet in eternity. It's only through Him, and through the reality of your marriage as a sacrament, that it's possible. Pope Francis points out "The sacrament is not a 'thing' or a 'power', for in it Christ himself 'now encounters Christian spouses... He dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another's burdens.'"<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* §73.

Francis reminds us that in marriage you are transformed; not in a nice-sounding figurative way, but for real. Sacramental grace is real. Jesus, the Word made flesh, is real. Alongside him, the words of your vows take on flesh as two become one. He is there, in times we sense His presence and even in times when we don't.

So often when I set out to form new habits in my marriage or achieve certain goals, the phrasing goes something like *I need to just [pray more, express my needs, take on more household responsibilities, you name it]. I'm going to start \_\_\_\_\_. I, I, I.*

It's so easy for me to lose sight of the reality that married life isn't about I at all, but *We*: me, my husband, and the Lord. What if, instead of expressing *I need to do \_\_\_\_\_*, we reframed our phrasing to *Lord, help me \_\_\_\_\_? Help us \_\_\_\_\_?*

In the rhythms of daily life, it's true that I'm accountable for my habits and choices, and that there are practical necessities for which you and your spouse must rely on each other. Yet in the big, divine picture of it all, the ultimate reliance is on Him. It's true and it's reassuring, but somehow...scary?

If you've ever felt a sense of anxiety as you bring your hopes and daily concerns to God, you're not alone. I've found gratitude to be the most powerful response to my worries. Specifically, I spend time contemplating the specific instances in my life where I see God's faithfulness and provision and pray in thanksgiving for all He has given: the summer of my first broken heart when I first prayed for my future husband—the same summer my now-husband survived swimming in the ocean during the start of a hurricane. The road trip when two tires blew out, with no cars near us in the next lane over and along a treeless stretch of highway. The timing and location of buying our first home next door to old friends who have since become like family. The gifts of my husband and children, exactly as they are.

In the big dramatic moments, though the simpler daily matters are equally deserving of my thanks and attention, it's impossible to deny the Lord's loving hand: all my life, and all of yours, He has been faithful and good.<sup>14</sup> Today, entrust your hopes and resolutions to Him with confidence, knowing He is never absent.

*For discussion:*

Try the gratitude exercise from today's reflection. Individually, and then together, sit in prayer and think of instances where you clearly see God's goodness and providence in your lives. It can be helpful to think in 3 or 5-year increments and go chronologically through your experiences. Share and talk about the words or ideas that arise in your prayer. Together, thank the Lord for what He has done in your lives and your relationship.

*For action:*

Today you read Pope Francis' words on Christ dwelling with you in your marriage, there to strengthen you and offer an unfailing example of love. As you consider His loving presence, recall the words you professed as you entered into the sacrament of marriage: together, read through the Catholic Rite of Marriage, and recite your vows to each other.<sup>15</sup>

*Pray:*

Lord, we come before you seeking total trust: that we may know the truth of your goodness and wisdom, even when we feel uncertain. In times of anxiety, may we find peace in your presence, confident in your providence and gratefully aware of all you have given us.

<sup>14</sup> Fielding, Ben and Cash, Ed, et. al. "Goodness of God." *Victory*. Bethel Music 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Text for the Church's 3 forms of celebrating the Rite of Marriage linked at "[Order of Celebrating Matrimony](#)," [For Your Marriage.org](#).

## Day Six: Resurrection

A willingness to self-sacrifice, even unto death, for someone you love, and to know his or her boundless worth and to live in freedom. This is the love of Jesus on the Cross.

Rightly so, the Cross is emblematic of the Christian life. I think about how often I hear phrases of encouragement in the spiritual life along the lines of “dying to self” and “carrying your cross,” and they are good. They remind us that love for another—and in marriage, a specific love for your spouse and any children you have—calls us out of comfort and into self-gift.

In the very first paragraph on “Love in Marriage” in *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis writes that “we cannot encourage a path of fidelity and mutual self-giving without encouraging the growth, strengthening and deepening of conjugal and family love.”<sup>16</sup> Why this as an opening statement?

The “growth, strengthening, and deepening” of love he refers to can only come from practice. That is, we grow and deepen our love when spouses and family members *choose* the path of faithfulness and self-gift. The Pope is showing us the path for sanctifying one another, with Christ’s sacrificial love as our model.

It’s a noble call worth pursuing. In your commitment to self-sacrifice and self-gift, remember to bear in mind what comes after Jesus’s suffering. Crosses and heavy burdens in life are unavoidable. What if, as we carry them, we take time to remember what follows?

The Cross isn’t the end of the story. The Resurrection, new life in Christ, comes after, and it has no end because it resounds through eternity. In your earthly marriage, consider the daily opportunities on tap for resurrection: How will you open yourselves to mercy and grace, bringing your relationship back to life after failures and mistakes? How will you offer forgiveness, in word and action?

<sup>16</sup> Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* §89.

Research suggests that the quality of relationships is closely linked to the quality of repair after conflict, rather than the actual frequency of conflict. Whether it’s between spouses, siblings, or parents and children, the words and actions you take to heal from challenges matter.<sup>17</sup> Death to self in your marriage and family life is beautiful, and so is resurrection of yourselves, which is only possible through grace: are you ready and willing to rise to the call you’ve been created and equipped for?

All of it flows not just from reliance on yourselves, but from the Lord, the source of all goodness and life anew.

*For discussion:*

Pope Francis discusses how the growth, strengthening, and deepening of love in marriage facilitates faithfulness and self-gift. In what areas of your marriage or family life do you desire to grow (spiritual, emotional, physical)? Identify 2-3 concrete steps you can take as a couple toward this growth and pray asking the Lord to sustain and provide for you in your efforts.

*For action:*

Schedule a day to go to confession this week. The words of absolution in the sacrament bring a peace like no other, no matter how long it’s been, and allow God’s grace to flow abundantly into every area of your relationship as spouses.

*Pray:*

Jesus, you suffered and died for love of us, heaven touching earth in your Incarnation and your cries from the Cross. In your rising, you opened the gates of heaven, so we might live always in the love of the Father. Resurrect what is dead in us, transforming our weaknesses to glory and drawing us more deeply into the love you’ve called us to in our marriage.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Benson, Kyle. “Repair is the Secret Weapon of Emotionally Connected Couples.” The Gottman Institute, June 26, 2024, <https://www.gottman.com/blog/repair-secret-weapon-emotionally-connected-couples/>.



## Day Seven: Conclusion

Today, we conclude a week spent examining the present state of your marriage—and your hopes for its future. I want to share what motivates me to stay committed to growth when I’m tempted back into my lazier, lesser habits.

Of course, it’s impossible to sustain the high of determination and optimism that comes from a period of reflection and goal setting in your marriage; but with grace, and an adjusted lens on your life, it is possible to set a foundation of resolve that you can return to again and again.

Photographers use long-range telephoto lenses to highlight subjects from a distance. You might have experienced images composed like this if your photographer stood at the start of the aisle at your wedding Mass, positioning her or himself to perfectly capture the emotion of the procession and your vows while giving you physical space to worship and receive the sacraments.

The difference between a close-up and long-range photo persists far beyond your wedding day. When I find myself wanting to zone out on my phone at night, rather than reconnect with my husband after a busy day of meeting others’ needs, I recognize my short-term want. Those are the closeup shots in the album of my earthly life. Yet I’ve worked to make sure I don’t lose sight of my long-term wants—the ones that wouldn’t be photographed up close, but from a distance. What will those long-range images show, and will I like what I see?

Pope Francis called our 21st-century desires for quick gratification and entertainment a “culture of the ephemeral,” and I see it in my habits.<sup>18</sup> Marriage is the opposite of the ephemeral—it’s for the rest of one’s life. When I zoom out on the big picture of my marriage, do I want to say I more often chose isolation and turning inward, opting for distraction that doesn’t deeply fulfill me? Or do I want to say I chose face-to-face interaction and deeper unity? Do I literally want to spend my life on my screens, half asleep; or do I want to

prioritize my husband and family in a way that’s fully alive?

To be clear, the inclination to relax isn’t a bad one! For me, it’s a matter of recognizing when my inclinations are drawing me toward more shallow and temporal forms of leisure and making a conscious choice to limit those forms, seeking out relationship over self-centeredness. I feel motivated when I consider the long-range implications of my choices: if the ultimate purpose of marriage is to grow in unity and sanctify one another so we might bring each other to the heavenly banquet, I want my actions to help me satisfy that purpose, not run from it.

Talk today about attachments you might have that draw you away from the ultimate purpose of your call to marriage. What changes might you make, starting today, that will help you feel at the end of your lives that you have worked to fulfill all you hoped for?

May you, and your marriage, be abundantly blessed.

*For Discussion:*

What will you remember most from this week of retreat? Were there topics or conversations that surprised you? Talk about the fruits of your reflections, especially any unexpected ones.

*For Action:*

As you consider the theme of marriage being “Together with Purpose,” express the purpose of the sacrament of marriage into your own words. Let it be a guiding principle for your relationship going forward.

These words, from sacred writings across the centuries, are an illuminating starting point:

*What your hands provide you will enjoy; you will be blessed and prosper: Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your home, Your children like young olive plants around your table...May the LORD bless you from Zion; may you see Jerusalem’s prosperity all the days of your life, and live to see your children’s children.*<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* §39.

<sup>19</sup> [Psalm 128:2-6](#).

*Now, not with lust, but with fidelity I take this kinswoman as my wife. Send down your mercy on me and on her, and grant that we may grow old together.<sup>20</sup>*

*A family's living space could turn into a domestic church, a setting for the Eucharist, the presence of Christ seated at its table.<sup>21</sup>*

*Love consists of a commitment which limits one's freedom - it is a giving of the self, and to give oneself means just that: to limit one's freedom on behalf of another.<sup>22</sup>*

*Pray:*

Lord, as we go forth from this week, we thank you for our creation as man and woman, brought together in marriage to sanctify each other and bring you glory. We praise you for our married life. May it fulfill your purposes in our family, our communities, and in the Church in the world; and may we walk each step of our lives in friendship and self-gift, unto your heavenly wedding banquet.



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<sup>20</sup> [Tobit 8:7](#).

<sup>21</sup> Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* §15.

<sup>22</sup> Wojtyla, Karol, *Love and Responsibility*, San Francisco: Ignatius, 135.

