

CWG II: “The Challenge to form a culture of invitation and hospitality to unmarried couples”

St Mark’s Parish Listening Session, August 10, 2016 + 6 Participants

Report by: Heidi Hill, Synod Delegate

1. *In light of the work of the Task Force on Young Adults, what direction should be adopted to deepen the involvement of young adults in the life of the Church?*
 - Provide direction and purpose in order to ground them.
 - Do not just leave alone for spiritual direction.
 - Give young adults something to do and a sense of purpose, tasks that get them involved, not just for the sake of entertainment.
 - Eliminate one size fits all spirituality; need gender specific.
 - Bring back tradition and devotion making Eucharistic celebration the main focus by offering a Mass specific for young adults that is provided by and orchestrated by them from music to lectors to Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist.
 - Expect them to be involved after confirmation in missionary work.
 - Make church visible on High School and college campuses with Pro-Life clubs and other issues youth are passionate about.
 - More vocation preparation classes on marriage for teens w/ Theology of the Body classes.
 - Less emotion and more substance in teaching.
 - Create specific pockets of engagement out in the community that are appealing to youth and young adults.
 - Provide childcare for single moms or young parents.
 - Create a bridge between singles/marrieds.

2. *How can our local church truly embody the principle of gradually reaching out and supporting couples who are in civil marriages or cohabiting?*
 - A dinner with your parish priest where they get to know each other and the priest has an opportunity to plug them in within the parish.
 - Educate and support marrieds to live the sacrament fully and make holy marriages active for others to see.
 - Be kind, loving and open.
 - Offer a one-time group that provides a non-judgmental venue for exploring feelings and discusses actual teachings of the Church besides RCIA.
 - Meet people where they are and love them along, and allow God to convict them in their own time.
 - Better explanations of Annulment which is not Catholic Divorce.
 - Explain the difference between sacramental marriage vs. civil or legal marriage.
 - Do not sacrifice the teachings of Christ. Show them beauty of sacraments and do not be afraid to talk about mortal sin. Cannot separate Charity from truth.
 - Create community of welcome
 - Community brings accountability

3. *What practice in our parishes and diocese alienate or frustrate couples seeking to marry in the Church?*
 - The distant to travel at high traffic times.

- Judgement, lack of love, kindness and understanding of their individual situations.
- Lack of venue where couples can express their frustrations and fears.
- Lack of readily available information regarding processes to be married in church. May seem intimidating and scary to many who are not Catholic.
- Be more welcoming.
- Office staff need to be more helpful or welcoming in spirit of service in love. This is the front line towards the teaching moment.
- Societal pressure that church is irrelevant.
- Shame-based practices.
- Rules and processes that need to be followed.

4. *How can our diocesan and parish efforts to provide effective marriage preparation be enhanced?*

- Marriage prep for all couples even those who civilly marry.
- Have all couples go through both private and small group preparation.
- Prepare before marriage about the sacrament of marriage as a vocation and what that means and looks like; the Why before the How.
- Work through past history with family of origin/ Hire in house counselors.
- Make NFP education mandatory and discuss children as a gift.
- Stress commitment and love as an action.
- Familiarize with Retrouvaille.
- Reinforce the importance of raising your kids Catholic.
- Stress what living Catholic looks like and avoiding mortal sin.
- Provide more adult catechesis on the difference between Cohabiting and the fullness of marriage.
- Build community and friendships to create accountability with practicing Catholics.

5. *Is there a realistic pathway to building structures of support for couples after they are married?*

- Male and female counselors on staff at the parish level
- Once a month whole marriage and parenting classes/groups that reestablish family rolls to combat social media
- Provide great web info “for your marriage.org or joyfilledmarriage.org