



Tell everyone who is discouraged,
Be strong and don't be afraid!
God is coming to your rescue..."

Isaiah 35:4

Catholic.org



The Pieta by Michelangelo

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

Greetings to friends of Catholic Engaged Encounter everywhere

As we journey through our Lenten experiences we can rest assured that Easter is near! May God give you the grace to persevere as Easter beckons on the horizon. We pray that God looks with favour on your Lenten observances, which lead to New Life in Christ!

Selwyn and Albertina Rodulfo

National Coordinators, Catholic Engaged Encounter Trinidad and Tobago



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Give Up this Bad Relationship Habit For Lent

DR. GREGORY POPCAK



This time of year, Catholics of every kind (even, research shows, Catholics who don't go to Church) are asking, "What have I given up for Lent?"

If you're looking for something a little different I have a small suggestion that will not only be a great spiritual exercise, it will also improve your marriage 100 fold. What is it? This Lent, I suggest that you give up loving your comfort zone more than you love your spouse.

A "comfort zone" represents a person's preferred ways of being and acting. My comfort zone keeps me on familiar ground and helps me feel safe. This isn't a bad thing by itself. Who doesn't want to feel safe and comfy? The only problem is that true love, and especially true, godly love, almost always demands that we leave our comfort zones behind challenging us to grow and stretch in ways that would never occur to us if our spouse wasn't in our lives. This negatively affects marriage in several



ways. First, it undermines intimacy. Intimacy requires us to know that it is safe to be vulnerable with a person. That means I have to know that if

I come to you with a need or a concern, you'll be willing to help me address it. But what if addressing my needs requires you to grow or change in ways that would be good for you, but somehow uncomfortable. For instance, what if your spouse needs you to be more communicative, or affectionate, or playful, or serious, or responsible, or faithful, etc? If you love your comfort zone more than your spouse, you will most likely hide out behind the excuse that "that's not me" and simply refuse to address your spouse's concern or need. As a result, your spouse will feel unsafe communicating his or her needs to you. If a couple does this often enough, they will close off their hearts to each other and live lives as "married singles." That is, people who share a house, but little of their lives with each other.

The second way loving your comfort zone damages marriage is by undermining relevance. Research shows that happy couples are more likely to seek out new experiences together than unhappy couples. They try new restaurants, take classes, try out new hobbies, seek out new things to do, just to mix things up. This variety-seeking isn't just a way to fight boredom. It is a way to learn more about each other, to expand your likes and dislikes, and to help each other become more well-rounded people. Couples who regularly challenge their comfort zones in positive ways for positive reasons tend to enjoy each other's company more and feel excited by all they ways their relationship is helping them grow. By contrast, couples who love their comfort zones more than they love each other tend to do the same things in the same ways. They reject opportunities to learn new things and feel threatened by change. These couples do not only find that their relationships become boring, they also fail to provide ways for the marriage to facilitate the growth that all human being need to feel alive. Again, these couples tend to either grow apart, or feel more suffocated in their relationships as time goes by.

The third way loving your comfort zone more than your spouse undermines marriage is by making it impossible to solve problems. Solutions to marital problems usually requires one or both spouses to change in at least some small way. The more a spouse adopts an "I am what I am and you know what I was when you married me" attitude, the more couples tend to get stuck in the same old problems and refight the same old exhausting fights again and again. As a counselor, I cannot tell you how many sessions revolve around the "why should I have to change?" question. The simple answer, of course, is that marriage requires change, and sacramental marriage—whose entire focus is helping couples become the saints God intends them to be—requires even more of a willingness to change. As I note in *For Better...FOREVER! A Catholic Guide to Lifelong Marriage*, "if you want to spend your life being comfortable, don't get a marriage license, buy a recliner."

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In Lent, Christians are called to make sacrifices that will bring us closer to God and help us become the people God is calling us to be. Marriage is meant to be the way that God perfects his sons and daughters in love and prepares us for the loving union that defines eternal life with God. Loving our comfort zones more than we love our spouse makes it impossible to fully enjoy the earthly, much less the heavenly, benefits of marriage. This Lent, make a sacrifice that really matters. Love your spouse more.

<https://catholicexchange.com/give-bad-relationship-habit-lent>



TWENTY LITTLE BUT POWERFUL WAYS TO INVEST IN YOUR MARRIAGE DURING AND AFTER LENT

1. Tell your husband or wife one thing you really appreciate about them.
2. Pray for your spouse and ask God for an encouragement for them.
3. Go for a walk together – just the two of you.
4. Ask your partner about their childhood memories and learn new things about them
5. Give your husband or wife a hug for no reason at all.
6. Ask your partner how you can pray for them today
7. Watch a favourite film or programme together
8. Plan an activity that they would love for you to do together
9. Find an old photo of the two of you and reminisce about a happy time together
10. Take time to discuss three goals for this year that you would like to achieve together
11. Give your partner a massage
12. Discuss ways you can serve together and make some plans to achieve this
13. Make plans to meet with a couple that inspire you or that you can be accountable to
14. Plan a date soon to make love and ask them what would make it special for them
15. Turn off the TV, screens and phones and spend an hour focused on listening to your spouse
16. Tell your husband or wife what you are grateful to them for
17. Ask them about their greatest hopes and dreams for the next five years
18. Cook or buy them a meal that they would love
19. Kiss for two minutes
20. Discuss what God is doing in your lives at the moment, together and separately

Adapted from: <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/40-ways-to-invest-in-your-marriage-during-lent/105106.htm>

Life Is Short. Love Your Spouse

kingdom of God.” If you believe the Ashley Madison lie and pursue it, and you continue to do so without repentance, you will not make it to

As the Ashley Madison leak continues playing out in the media, we’re reminded so clearly about the lies of sin. The Ashley Madison Company, a cheating site that is (sadly) very successful, has the following motto: “Life is short. Have an affair.” The lies don’t come much more blatantly than this.

heaven. Take these warnings of Scripture seriously, and let them spur you on to obedience. (See also Hebrews 13:4.)

But why are so many falling for it? Why is it that Ashley Madison can boast of over 37 million users — with professing Christians among them? It’s because sin is just that enticing. And just that deceptive. To have sex with someone who is not your spouse can seem so exhilarating, especially if one’s marriage has become dull and boring. Sin clouds our vision, distorts our perception of reality, and if we haven’t fed our souls on specific truths to chase away the lies, one day we may find ourselves buying into the very lie we once thought was unthinkable.



What, then, are some strategies we can use, while we’re in our right minds, to combat such temptations? How can we fight to believe the truth rather than lies, not only today, but next year and twenty years from now?

2. Be guarded in your relationships with members of the opposite sex. An older and godly mentor of mine shared an insight with me once that I have not forgotten. He commented on the role humor can play in extramarital attachments. Not that we can’t have a good sense of humor. But we should be wary of excessive joking and teasing with members of the opposite sex. It can become dangerous.

Think in terms of two categories: guarding your marriage and cultivating the garden of your marriage. Defensive strategies (guarding) fend off the negative and deceptive claims of sin, and offensive strategies (gardening) pursue what is right and true.

3. Be mindful of the influences you allow to shape your thinking. Are you regularly watching movies and shows that glorify fornication and adultery? Are you reading novels that romanticize infidelity? Avoid such influences, and do so relentlessly. In Mark 9:43, Jesus exhorts us in graphic terms, “If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off.” I take that to mean, “If the romantic drama or sensual images are causing you to stumble, do what you can to cut them out of your life.”

Guard Your Marriage

1. Read God’s warnings. Sexual immorality is listed among the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19–21, where we’re told that “those who do such things will not inherit the

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Garden Your Marriage

1. Cling to God's promises. Yes, there are scary warnings in the Bible, and also glorious promises. For instance, Jesus promises in the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

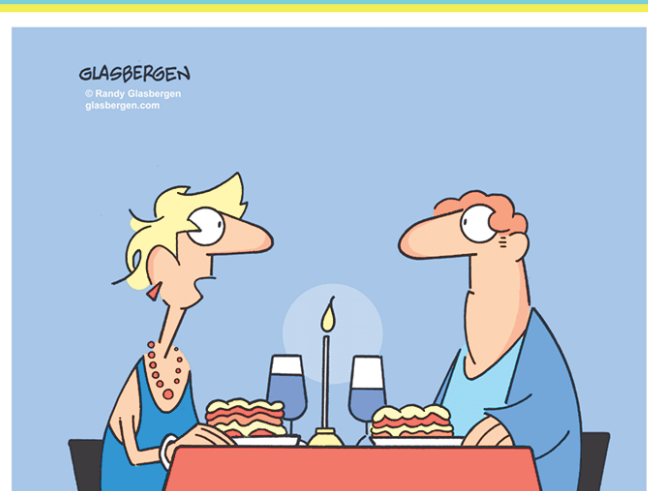
2. Talk, talk, talk with your spouse. Remember when you and your spouse were first dating? Remember the curiosity and inquisitiveness? Work to keep that alive. I am fascinated again and again by the new things I see and learn about my wife. We've been married for fifteen years, but I'm still getting to know her.

3. Date your spouse. To foster those quality conversations, keep dating. Especially with kids, it's essential to set aside time for undistracted, face-to-face interaction. Find enjoyable activities to do together. Try new experiences. Make new memories. Laugh a lot together.

4. Study and review God's beautiful design for marriage. I believe the most powerful step Christians can take to strengthen their marriages is to deepen their understanding of what God intends marriage to be, and what he intends marriage to point to. This reality draws us outside of ourselves into something divine, something eternal — because the intimate union of a husband and wife in marriage was created by God to be a picture of Christ's relationship to the church (Ephesians 5:32).

In light of this truth, and in the midst of a culture that tragically diminishes the sacredness of marriage, Christians should yearn for their marriages to be a compelling gospel parable.

Don't fall for the Ashley Madison lie, or others like it. Yes,

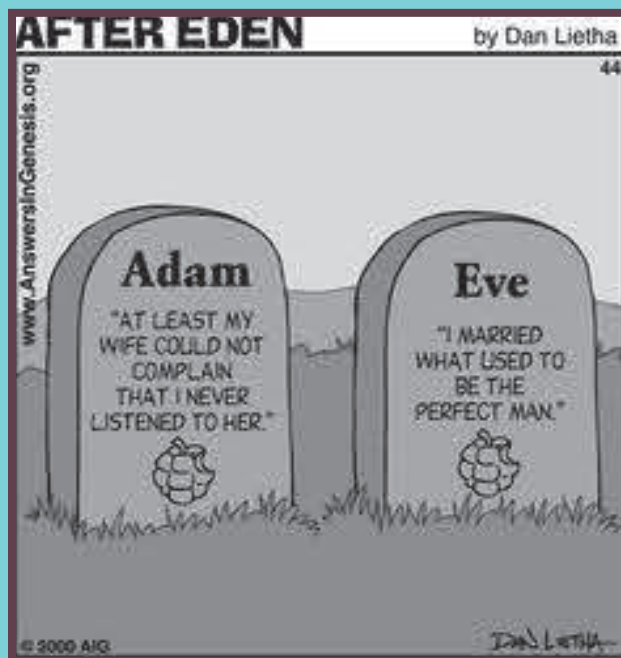


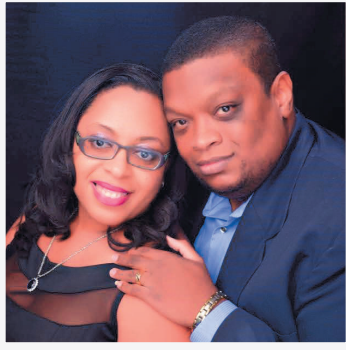
"Our relationship is like a lasagna. A layer of love, a layer of anger, a layer of joy, a layer of pain...but all together, not a bad combination!"

life is short; don't waste it on short-lived highs that will leave you lower than you began. Take the necessary steps in your own life to affair-proof your marriage, as much as possible, for the glory of Christ.

Let the Ashley Madison leak and lies inspire you to both guard your marriage and cultivate the garden.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/life-is-short-love-your-spouse>





**Andre and Gizelle Hinkson:
Our Journey to Teaming**

Andre:

Just over a year ago Gizelle and I began assisting with Saturday morning breakfast on Catholic Engaged Encounter weekends.

But our journey began more than a year before that, when my co-worker, who was already part of the ministry, suggested that we should come and get involved. We discussed it and felt an inclination to do so, but didn't pursue it further. A few months later she mentioned it to me again, and once more Gizelle and I discussed it, but took no further action.

Gizelle:

About a week later while walking along Maraval Road, I ran into a "brother" from a COR retreat; he along with his wife, had been one of the presenting couples when Andre and I did our weekend in 2008. As we updated each other on how life had been since last we spoke, I mentioned our marriage was going well, and how much we had enjoyed our weekend, as it had confirmed for us that we were indeed on the right path. He quickly replied "So how come I haven't seen you guys coming back to help?" I thought to myself "Clearly the Lord is trying to tell us something, sending two different people into both our lives with the same message." My "brother" promised to get in touch with us for the next recall session for couples; he made good on his promise and a couple weeks later, when called to attend, we said yes, believing that we were answering God's call.

Andre:

On the morning of the session I awoke with a migraine, the kind that no painkiller could ease and that required you to stay in a dark room for hours. Gizelle quickly suggested that we send our apologies as I was in no condition to go anywhere. However, I decided that I was not going to let anything stand in the way of answering God's call. In spite of the pain, we headed out. And the journey was worth it. By the end of the session, we knew that this was where we needed to be. Gizelle had already decided that we should be a Presenting Couple; but being my usual cautious self, we chose instead to start by helping out on the weekends and observing some of the other presenting couples, so we could truly understand what was involved. We therefore continued assisting with the early Saturday breakfast.

Gizelle:

When the opportunity to become part of the ministry arose, my first thought was that we should present. And I reflected on our relationship, on how blessed we are to have had eight happy years of marriage, in a world where so many marital relationships were breaking down. I considered all the little bumps in the road, hurdles and challenges we'd been able to overcome, by the grace of God. This confirmed for me that presenting was what we should be doing. But I knew that Andre would need to come to this conclusion in his own time, so I left it in God's hands.

Andre:

As we continued to spend our weekends with our new CEETT family, all the while praying about whether we should indeed become a presenting couple, I slowly became more comfortable with the idea. Many of the other couples willingly shared their experiences with us, and assured that we would not be asked to share anything that made us uncomfortable, and that we would be fully supported throughout the journey. Soon my concerns subsided and one Saturday morning while driving to Emmaus centre to help with yet another breakfast, I looked at Giz and said "I'm ready".

Gizelle:

To which I responded "ready for.....???" and to my surprise he replied "to present". And I guess as the saying goes the rest is history.

We are now writing talks on our journey to become a Presenting Couple. May God who has started this good work in us, bring it to fulfilment.. (Phillipians 1:6)



Andre and Gizelle Hinkson will be celebrating their 9th wedding anniversary on April 18th. Andre is a huge Man U fan, while Gizelle loves a good book.



Lent for the Married



Adapted from Katie Sciba

Andrew and I were passing ideas back forth – sweets, alcohol, eating between meals. What to give up for Lent? I could do the typical, but I want this year to be different. I want to thrill in Easter joy on a level deeper than Reese’s and the relief that the strife is o’er.

So I thought I’d start with God’s biggest call in my life – my husband. Marriage with Andrew is my life’s work. A priest friend of ours told us recently, “Your vocation is not to this general idea of marriage, it’s to Andrew. And God will call to you from within that vocation.” Marriage-to-Andrew is my ticket to heaven and the most important thing Jesus asks me to do. And so I’m focusing my sacrifices and efforts on seeing that we are bigger than me, as well as the fact that the Lord Himself designed us to draw the other closer to Him. And if there’s anything the two of us could use more of, it’s Jesus.

Here is non-exhaustive list of what any two marrieds could do during Lent.

1) Leave the kids with grandparents (or bring them along!) and go to Mass during the week. Nothing and no one will improve your marriage better than Jesus.

2) Ask, “What can I do to make your day better?” Full disclosure: this is a hard one for me. The house, home-schooling, kids, etc. are demanding enough on me and when I’m not wrestling the laundry, I really want to just sit down and do what I do. Swallowing my pride and setting aside my plans to make room for someone else’s is tough – especially when that someone else is adult and capable of handling his own tasks and to-dos. Super saintly, I know; the really that’s the point. The King of Kings and Creator of the universe subjected himself to the service of mankind; I can and should do the same.

Marriage-to-your spouse is your ticket to heaven and the most important thing Jesus asks you to do.

3) Keep in mind that you two are a team – approach conflict in a way that tackles the issue instead of each other. One of my favourite professors at Benedictine once told my class, “My wife and I know that we’re two people looking for the truth, so what could be an argument becomes a joint effort toward what’s best for us and our family.”

4) Go to adoration. Swing by the chapel at the start or end of a date or plan a whole hour together. Drawing closer to Christ will bless all that vocation stuff you do. If you can’t make it as a couple, bring his intentions with you before the Lord. As his wife, I know I’m Andrew’s designated intercessor.

5) Don’t interrupt – either vocally or in your mind. Whether he’s filling you in on his day or hashing out his side of an argument, quiet yourself and give him an ear instead of conjuring a response while he’s talking. Ask the Lord to help you receive him as He receives him.

6) Anticipate his needs – does he need a lunch for work? Do you know that his keys aren’t in the usual spot? Put them away. Get his car washed. Send a love note email every day around the same time so he’ll look forward to it. Help make life at home enjoyable for him and your kids.

7) Are you ready for this? Pray the Litany of Humility. Ouch, I know. But lemme tell ya – it hurts so good.

8) Give together. Serve your parish, extended family, or group of friends. Treat another family (or a few!) to a night off from making dinner by prepping the whole thing yourself. Volunteer somewhere. Substitute for someone’s holy hour. Imitate Christ through shared self-giving.

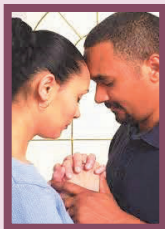
9) Complete The Love Dare together or on your own.

10) Make time for each other to go to confession every couple of weeks. Be gracious and generous about how long it may take and if you have kids, don’t complain or elaborate on the chaos and challenge of keeping them when your sweetie comes home.



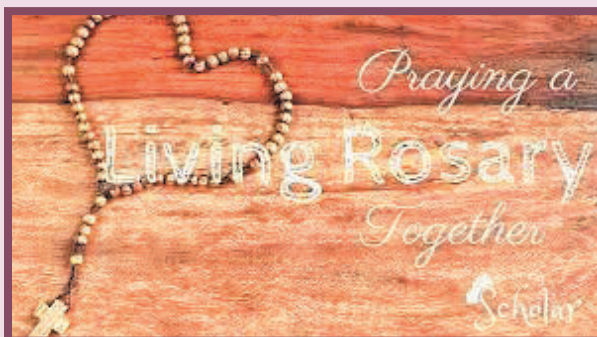
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11) Bless another couple! Offer to watch their kids while they take a much-needed night or morning out together.



12) Pray together daily. It doesn't have to be complicated or eloquent, but I challenge you to go one step beyond what you're doing right now. If you don't pray together yet, start with one Glory Be together when you wake up or go to bed – ultimately, our marriages are made for the glory of God.

Pray the Rosary or a Chaplet. If you want to be really spiritually intimate, pray over each other out loud – speak to Jesus about your husband and let your sweetheart have a listen in. It will change you both.



13) Fast. Abstain from something – cream and sugar in your coffee, snacks on Tuesday afternoons, butter on your toast. Offer small sacrifices solely for your spouse's salvation and well-being.

14) Read Scripture together because the Word of God changes hearts.

15) Give alms. Comb your budget for extra discretionary funds to offer a particular charity or give it to your parish on top of your tithe.

How else can you Lent with your man?? I want to remember that Jesus who blessed the marriage at Cana wants to be invited to my relationship with my husband. And doing so will heal our wounds, fortify us for life's storms, and help us experience that deep Easter joy.

theCatholicWife.net

Catholic Engaged Encounter had their annual Lenten retreat on March 9th to 11th at Amanecer, Lopinot. Fr. Ferdinand Warner and Mr. and Mrs. Atherly Nicholas were the presenters for the day. The Retreat used as its foundation, the 2017 pastoral letter of the former Archbishop of Port of Spain, Fr. Joe Harris; Return to Hospitality, which was written to the Catholic Faithful and all people of Goodwill.

CEETT Lenten Retreat 2018



Attending mass at Surrey Village

hospitable. While society may be moving away from hospitality because of selfish motives, we have a duty to continue to be hospitable as demonstrated by Christ. If we create such an environment, it will tend to radiate outwards to the wider society.

◆ In a deeper way we are called to be hospitable to our spouse, showing acceptance, service, trust, and not looking for reward.



Fr. Ferdinand Warner

There was an examination of the some of the virtues or behaviours inherent in hospitality, such as humility, kindness, generosity, compassion, empathy and sharing as demonstrated by Abraham's interaction with the three men, who turned out to be angels.

Other points of note:

- ◆ The Eucharist is the ultimate sign of hospitality where Jesus shares His very life and being with us, inviting us to come to table, an open invitation, where there is room for everyone.
- ◆ For hospitality to be shown to someone, we must view the person in a particular way; if one is viewed as an enemy or intrusion, then it is less likely we will be

In looking at our marriages, we were reminded of the type of love that we are meant to show; covenant love, which aims always to forgive and restore. Others should be attracted to marriage by the example of our own witness.

In our ministry we must remember that our efforts add nothing to God's majesty, neither should it be seen simply as a way of "giving back" or "feeling good". We embark on ministry because we perceive it to be the will of God, and we move in obedience to Him.



Atherly Nicholas leading in song



Listening attentively



"Maybe I am thick, but I can't understand a woman who gives up her diet for Lent"



©2008 Currier Black in herethestimes.com



"These are vegetables, mother. You wouldn't want me to eat something I've given up for Lent, would you?"

