

## SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND

In Sunday's gospel Jesus teaches about marriage in the context of discipleship. The exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees takes place on Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. He is leading his disciples and teaching along the way. His disciples accompany him even though he keeps insisting he will suffer, die, and be raised up.

The specific literary form of Sunday's gospel is that of a controversy story. Pharisees try to get Jesus to take sides in a legal dispute. Jesus quotes the law of Moses, which in Deuteronomy 24.1-4 allows divorce, to argue that from the beginning God intends humans to be social, to marry, and become one. Jesus quotes Genesis 2.18-24, which is Sunday's first reading, saying that human beings, whom God creates male and female, become inseparably one in marriage.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* understands marriage as a sacrament of service because each spouse makes an other-centered commitment. Two people become one in marriage; they learn to know each other's habits, ways of thinking, and preferences, yet no two people totally fuse. Only self-giving love and communication bridge our separate selves.

*SPIRIT* explores what helps relationships, especially marriages, last. Adolescence is the learning time for making, breaking, and keeping interpersonal relationships. In the pain of these years, teens can develop their capacity for intimacy and grow beyond romantic stereotypes.

## SHARING LIFE STORIES

**Objective:** The young people will explore their experiences of teens breaking up relationships.

**Music:** See *SPIRIT Xtra* for a song that fits the gospel theme.

### PRAY

Hand out copies of *SPIRIT* to each member of your group and pray the prayer on the cover.

**Icebreaker Checklist (cover)** Have your teens read the checklist silently and identify individually why they think young people avoid dealing with relationships. Divide your group into threes or fours and compare the reasons each selected. Have the small groups identify the top three reasons they agree on and report these to the whole group. Tally these reports on a chalkboard or newsprint.

### READ

**Story: Beyond Invisible (pages 1-3)** Have your teens use the title, photos, and call out to speculate on what the story is about. Ask if they have ever felt "beyond invisible" as the opening paragraph describes.

- Have strong readers take turning reading the story aloud, changing at the large capital letters.
- Discuss questions 1-6. *1. Her disbelief and denial keeps her from feeling. 2. The water drop dries up like the relationship. 3. The author seems to feel her standing in the group depended on Tommy and that the group has heard about the break up from him and talked about it. 4. Both young men and women need to experience relationships with their peers on their own*

*rather than as a couple, so they develop their individual identities. 5. Tommy talked to the author face to face and didn't say harsh things. 6. You can be somebody without Tommy.*

## REFLECTING ON THE GOSPEL

**Objective:** The young people will recognize Jesus calls his disciples to faithfulness in marriage.

### GOSPEL

**Marriage is lasting love (pages 2-3)** Ask four teens to proclaim the gospel. Discuss questions 7-8. *7. Jesus teaches that God created human beings male and female and that in marriage the two become inseparably one. No one should separate couples God joins together. Jesus expects husbands and wives to love one another faithfully. 8. For a marriage to last one has to have a secure personal identity and be capable of sharing oneself intimately with another. This takes practice. Friendship and dating help us learn the skills of expressing feelings, communicating, making choices.*

**Objective:** The young people will develop skills for building lasting relationships.

**Breaking up as friends (page 2)** Have your teens read this feature in pairs and follow the directions at the bottom about role playing. Evaluate what is helpful and what is hurtful in the ways each pair breaks up.

## LIVING OUR CATHOLIC FAITH

**Objective:** The young people will recognize marriage is a sacrament.

**Our Catholic Faith: Marriage Is a Sacrament (page 4)** Have pairs join to make groups of four. Direct them to read this feature aloud in their small groups then discuss *Live It!* item 1. Allow five minutes for discussion; then invite the small groups to share their ideas. Lead into discussing *Live It!* item 2 as a whole group.

- Encourage teens to talk with their parents about what dating was like in their teens, as *Live It!* 3 suggests. Young people socialize differently in many ways today. Consider inviting a married couple to talk with your group as *Live It!* item 4 suggests, especially if they are juniors and seniors.

**What Is Annulment? (page 4)** Many teens have parents who are divorced. This sidebar explains the Church's teaching about annulment. Stress that immaturity is a frequent reason for annulments, which underlines the reasons for developing skills for relationships.

**Concluding Prayer** Name in a general way concerns you have heard your teens talk about. Invite any who wish to add their concerns. Then pray together again the opening prayer.

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