

Witness to Love Launches First-of-its Kind Civil Marriage Initiative for Spanish-Speaking Couples

Long-awaited initiative aims to inspire Hispanic and Latino Catholics in civil unions to pursue sacramental marriage

Lafayette, LA, September 28, 2020 – Witness to Love announces the launch of its Hispanic Marriage Initiative designed to serve the specific needs of Hispanic and Latino couples in civil or long-standing free unions. This one-of-a-kind initiative equips dioceses, parishes, and communities to seek out, support, encourage, and inspire Hispanic couples in civil unions to pursue the joy of sacramental marriage.

This long-awaited and revolutionary initiative by Witness to Love aims to reach the large underserved Hispanic population in the US, where four out of ten couples are living in civil marriages, making up about 20 percent of Catholic marriages in America. Currently in its pilot phase, this new Hispanic Civil Marriage Initiative will be available for implementation by parishes and dioceses across the United States in Spring 2021.

“There is a great need for offering a more enriching marriage formation crafted specifically for the Hispanic community,” states Ryan Verret, co-founder of Witness to Love. “This is an urgent initiative for our Church today because Hispanics are the largest growing demographic in the United States, making up 40 percent of the Catholic Church in America according to [OSV research](#),” continues Verret.

“Unfortunately, most decide to leave the Church before the age of 24. We want to avoid the risk of losing an entire generation of Hispanics and their rich faith traditions; we must learn to minister to a new generation of Hispanic marriages and families.”

According to Daniela Mazzone who oversees Hispanic outreach for Witness to Love, “A majority of weddings in the Hispanic community are convalidations. Many times formation for civilly married Hispanic couples seeking the sacrament is inadequate or omitted completely due to a lack of resources in the parish or in efforts to expedite the process. This does a great disservice to couples who are transitioning from a contractual relationship to a covenantal relationship.”

In response to this crisis, Witness to Love, with the support of Our Sunday Visitor Institute, is excited to launch this highly anticipated initiative to better serve Hispanic couples in civil and free unions seeking to receive the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. The Hispanic Marriage Initiative has been made possible by a generous grant from OSV Institute which has made Hispanic outreach one of their top three funding priorities.

“OSV Institute is proud to be part of this vital initiative,” said Jason Shanks, President of the OSV Institute. “In the spirit of Pope Francis and accompaniment, there are many more Hispanic/Latino couples in civil unions that need to be invited to come forth to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony. Many have misunderstandings or fears that could be put to rest if parishes were properly equipped to identify, invite, and support these couples,” reiterated Shanks.

The uniqueness of this initiative not only offers proper formation for the couples but also for parish leaders, mentors, and parish priests who will be accompanying these couples beyond their wedding dates. Through this new initiative, couples will find a deeper sense of belonging within their parishes and discover how their marriage is called to be a great gift for each other, the Church, and society at large.

To learn more about the Hispanic Marriage Initiative view the complete press kit in [Spanish](#) and [English](#).

To schedule an interview with Ryan and Mary Rose Verret in English or with Daniela Mazzone in Spanish, contact Carrie Kline at carriek@revolutionizingmissions.com

Witness to Love provides parishes with the tools and resources to transform existing programs of marriage preparation and sacramental marriage formation into dynamic marriage programs that foster both parish connection and nurture authentic accompaniment both before and after the wedding day.

OSV Institute was founded in 1915 by Fr. John Francis Noll to extend the reach of Our Sunday Visitor in service and support of Catholic organizations. With over \$80 million returned to Catholic organizations to date, the OSV Institute continues to serve the Church by supporting and encouraging innovative and effective Church-related programs and activities. Three areas of special interest for funding are Re-Captivating Millennials, Hispanic Experience, and Supporting Parents. In 2017, the Institute expanded its reach to provide support for new innovation and to serve as an incubator for new efforts supporting the Catholic Church. Learn more at osvinstitute.com.

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