**Marriage Preparation for Lutherans and Catholics Together**

Best wishes to you both as you plan to be married. We praise God with you for the wonderful gift of God that marriage is. As you prepare to marry, you are thinking about your relationship as husband and wife and about the relationships that develop between your two families and clans. As Christians, your marriage also includes God’s relationship with you! Your marriage in the church affirms this holy relationship.

Lutherans and Catholics in Papua New Gunea have made a committment together to follow the teaching of Christ on marriage. In that commitment together, we want to support Lutherans and Catholics who are preparing for marriage.

God created human beings to be both physical and spiritual beings. If we separate the physical from the spiritual in our lives our relationships with others and with God become destructive. When we follow God’s design for us as both physical and spiritual beings, we will be responsible in our sexual behaviour as married and unmarried people. This means faithfulness to our spouse within marriage and abstinence outside of marriage. This is God’s design for a good and fulfilling life.

Marriage is a special call from God to come together as husband and wife, and God supports the married couple in their married life with his love – a love that is creative, redemptive and sanctifying.

Marriage is a gift of God from creation which is for our humn good and happiness. Husband and wife share love and companionship with each other (*Genesis* 2) and share with God in creating and nurturing new life when children are born to them (*Genesis* 1). Sexual activity of a married couple is holy. It is a special expression of the fact that husband and wife have become “one flesh.”

Marriage is a lifelong public covenant of faithfulness to each other. A man and a woman make a free solemn vow and promise of enduring, exclusive love and mutual self-giving. When baptised Christians commit themselves to each other in marriage their relationship is a symbol of God’s relationship with us in Christ and of the compassionate and constant love of Christ for his Church. Husband and wife commit to love and honour one another, offering mutual support in difficult as well as happy times.

When children are born to a married couple, they are called to be responsible parents – loving, supporting and guiding their children. Parents especially need to take responsibility for raising their children in the Christian faith.

When you are preparing to marry, we encourage you to make contact early with your congregation, pastor and priest. Both your Catholic priest and Lutheran pastor can help to prepare you for marriage. We respect the faith of each spouse in marriage and do not demand that one spouse convert and join the other’s church. We, however, invite and encourage you to discuss and come to agreement about the baptism and Christian education of the children you will have.

We respect each other’s rite of marriage. You will need to decide in which church your marriage will be celebrated. With the agreement of their churches, a Catholic priest or deacon may participate in the Lutheran marriage service or a Lutheran pastor may participate in the Catholic service. There is to be only one marriage ceremony, and the presiding minister is the one in whose church the marriage is celebrated. He is the minister who receives the marriage vows. At the invitation of the presiding minister, the minister of the other church may offer prayers, read from the Scriptures, give a brief encouragement and bless the couple.

The marriage shall be recorded in the church registry books and a certificate of marriage be given to the married couple.

We also encourage that marriages in our churches be registered by civil law.

We are committed to providing pastoral care and help to you as a married couple. While there are differences between Catholics and Lutherans, we share together the Scripture as God’s Word for us. We also share the common beliefs of the early Christian Creeds. It is important to us both that Christians regularly come together with the Body of Christ to worship and praise God, and to be faithful in prayer. It is also important to acknowledge our need for forgiveness from God and from one another, and to be people who witness to the gift of God’s grace in our lives. As baptized Lutheran and Cathoic Christians wishing to marry in the church, your marriage bond takes on a new meaning as a sign of Christ’s love for his Church. God’s Word will give you the grace to be faithful and mutually forgiving in your marriage.

Your marriage in the church, grounded in your Christian faith, will support your love, strengthen your comittment to your vows and provide happiness in your married life.