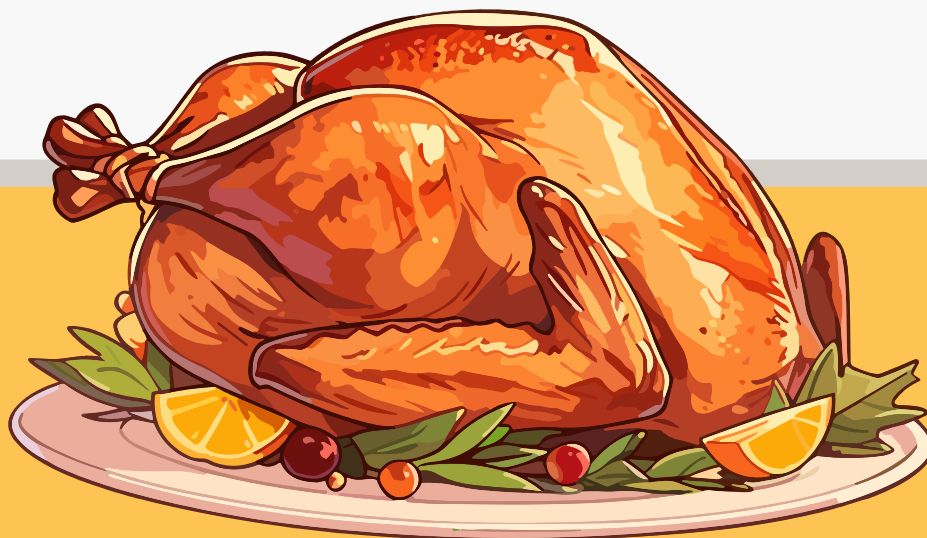




Keep Calm and Pass the Turkey:

Avoid Holiday Blow Ups using
P.E.A.C.E. Talks, A Step-by-
Step Guide for Catholic
Couples to Keep the Peace
During the Holiday Season



HOLY UNION



Colin and Jean MacKenzie are a Catholic couple passionate about helping others build strong, faith-filled marriages. Jean, a registered psychologist, and Colin, a veteran with 32 years in the Canadian military, combine their expertise to offer couples practical, spiritual, and psychological tools to navigate the joys and challenges of marriage. Through Holy Union Connect, they provide courses, podcast episodes, and daily reflections that empower couples to deepen their connection, grow in virtue, and place Christ at the center of their sacramental union.

LET YOUR CONVERSATION
BE ALWAYS FULL OF
GRACE, SEASONED WITH
SALT, SO THAT YOU MAY
KNOW HOW TO ANSWER
EVERYONE.

—
~ Colossians 4:6

THE THREE STEP PROCESS

1

Pinpoint the Problem:

Get specific about the topic you need to discuss .

2

Set Aside Time

Set aside time in a quiet, distraction-free space for your conversation.

3

Practice P.E.A.C.E.

Follow the P.E.A.C.E. Talks protocol to navigate your discussion with grace and understanding.

THE P.E.A.C.E. TALKS APPROACH

The **P.E.A.C.E. Talks** approach provides Catholic couples with a simple, faith-centered framework for navigating difficult conversations. This approach encourages **setting aside dedicated time** to talk, ensuring that discussions happen when both partners are calm and emotionally prepared—not in moments of heightened stress or when triggered. With steps focused on prayer, clear communication, and emotional regulation, P.E.A.C.E. Talks helps couples address challenging topics with grace, empathy, and mutual respect, strengthening their relationship and deepening their connection to one another and to God.

P

Pray Together:

Start with a prayer to invite God into your conversation.

E

Establish Your Intention:

Clearly state your intention for the discussion.

A

Assess and Regulate Emotions

Take a moment to check in with yourself emotionally, and use self-regulation and co-regulation strategies to ensure you are both ready to engage in a calm and constructive conversation.

C

Communicate Gently:

Use soft startup, “I” messages, and reflective listening to ensure understanding.

E

Express Appreciation:

End with appreciation to reinforce connection and positivity.

P: PRAY TOGETHER

What Can Go Wrong:

Neglecting Prayer: Starting the conversation without grounding yourself in prayer can make you both anxious or defensive. You might focus on winning the argument rather than seeking a mutual solution. This could lead to a combative rather than a collaborative atmosphere.

What You Can Do Instead:

Pray Together: Begin by praying to the Holy Spirit, inviting peace and wisdom into your conversation. Starting with prayer can help set a gentle and hopeful tone for the discussion, reminding you both that you are on the same team.



HOLY SPIRIT PRAYER

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth. O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, Through
Christ Our Lord,

Holy Spirit, Guide us as we enter this conversation together. Fill our hearts with Your peace and grant us the wisdom to understand each other. Help us to speak with kindness, to listen with patience, and to seek unity in our decisions. May Your presence calm our emotions and lead us toward love and mutual respect. Inspire us to act in ways that reflect Your grace, bringing us closer to You and each other.

AMEN

Our Lady, Queen of Peace,

Pray for us.

E: ESTABLISH YOUR INTENTION

What Can Go Wrong:


No Clear Intention: Jumping straight into logistics without clarifying your intention might cause confusion and misunderstandings. One partner might think the goal is just to make a schedule, while the other wants to address feelings about family obligations, leading to frustration and feeling unheard.

What You Can Do Instead:

Set Your Intention Clearly: Each of you should state why you want to have the conversation. For example, say, "I want to talk about our holiday plans so that we can find a way to honour both our families and make time for us to enjoy the holidays together."



Take a moment to reflect on what you hope to achieve in your conversation about the holidays. Write your intentions below:



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A: ASSESS AND REGULATE EMOTIONS

What Can Go Wrong:

Skipping Emotional Check-In: Beginning the conversation without first assessing your emotional state might lead to one or both partners approaching the discussion with heightened emotions. If one partner feels anxious or frustrated, it can easily lead to miscommunication, defensiveness, or an escalation of tension.

What You Can Do Instead:

Assess and Regulate Emotions: Take a moment to assess how you're feeling before starting the conversation. If you notice that you're feeling anxious, frustrated, or tired, take steps to self-regulate before diving in.



ASSESS READINESS



Am I feeling calm?



Am I:

- Hungry
- Angry
- Lonely
- Tired
- Stressed/Sick



Are we emotionally ready for a productive discussion?

EMOTION REGULATION STRATEGIES

- Deep breathing
- Grounding:
Feeling your feet on the floor
- Holding hands
- Eye gazing
- Full body hug
- Calming affirmations or bible quotes
- Emulating Christ

C: COMMUNICATE GENTLY

What Can Go Wrong:

Harsh Start and Accusations: Using harsh language, accusations, or starting off with criticism can lead to defensiveness. Instead of being open to discussion, your partner may feel attacked and shut down emotionally, which prevents productive conversation.

What You Can Do Instead:

Use a Soft Startup and “I” Messages: Begin the conversation gently, avoiding blaming statements. Use “I” messages to express your feelings.



“I” Messages

The formula for an effective "I" message follows this structure:

"I feel [emotion] when [specific situation], because [reason]. I would appreciate it if [desired action or solution]."

“I” Message Example:

I feel overwhelmed when we don't plan our holiday schedule in advance because it makes me anxious about last-minute changes. I would appreciate it if we could sit down and plan things together ahead of time."

Create some “I” messages you can use during your difficult conversation.

E: EXPRESS APPRECIATION

What Can Go Wrong:

No Appreciation Given: If the conversation ends without either partner expressing gratitude, one or both might feel unappreciated, especially if compromises were made. This can result in feeling undervalued or resentful, impacting the relationship negatively over time.

What You Can Do Instead:

Express Appreciation: Close the conversation by thanking your partner for their willingness to talk and for any compromises they made.



Create a list of things you appreciate about your spouse:



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AVOIDING HOLIDAY BLOW UPS CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to guide you and your spouse through your discussion, ensuring that you stay on track and follow the steps for a calm, productive conversation.

1 Pinpoint the Problem

Identify the topic you need to discuss.

Have we clearly identified the issue we need to talk about?

Write the topic here: _____

2 Set Aside Time

Set aside time in a quiet, distraction-free space for your conversation.

Have we agreed on a specific time for the conversation?

Time & date: _____

Have we created a peaceful environment for the talk?

Location for the discussion: _____

3 Practice P.E.A.C.E.

Follow the P.E.A.C.E. Talks protocol.

Pray Together
Have we started with a prayer to invite God into our conversation?

Establish Your Intention
Have we each shared our goal for this conversation?

Assess and Regulate Emotions
Have we checked in with our emotions and used calming strategies?

Communicate Gently
Are we using a soft startup, “I” messages, and reflective listening?

Express Appreciation
Have we closed the conversation by expressing gratitude to each other?

FREE RESOURCES



DAILY MARRIAGE REFLECTIONS

Start your day with spiritual inspiration to strengthen your marriage with bite-sized reflections rooted in Catholic teaching, designed to help you and your spouse grow in love, faith, and connection.

[MORE INFORMATION](#)



KINDNESS CHALLENGE

Add more love and joy to your marriage with small, daily acts of kindness. With text templates, simple ideas, and thoughtful prompts, this challenge is designed to help you reconnect and grow closer through intentional kindness.

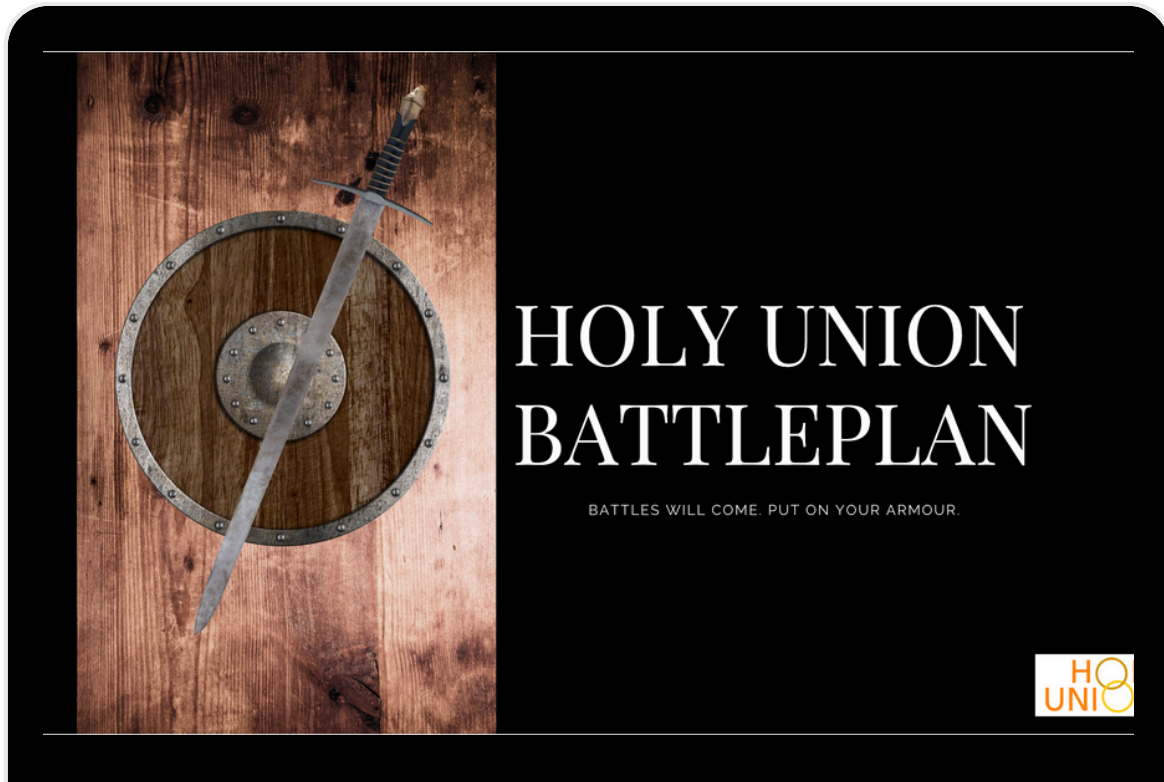
[MORE INFORMATION](#)



CONNECTED CONVERSATIONS PODCAST

Join us for a dive deep into the joys, struggles, and spiritual journey of Catholic marriage. Featuring real stories, expert advice, and faith-based insights, each episode will inspire and equip you with practical tools to strengthen your relationship.

[MORE INFORMATION](#)



The Holy UNION Battleplan is a comprehensive course designed to help Catholic couples build strong, faith-filled marriages in the midst of today's spiritual battles. Recognizing that marriage and family are at the heart of a profound spiritual struggle—as emphasized by Our Lady of Fatima—we provide couples with the tools to defend and strengthen their sacred union. Combining Catholic teachings, psychology, neurobiology, and insights from military experience, this course equips you to navigate challenges, grow in virtue, and stand united against forces that threaten the sanctity of marriage.

Whether you're seeking to deepen your connection or overcome specific struggles, the Holy UNION Battleplan empowers you to place Christ at the center of your relationship and fight together for the lasting strength of your marriage.

**Join Holy UNION
Battleplan!**

*MAY THE PEACE
OF
CHRIST
BE WITH YOU.*

Cofin & Jean

MacKenzie

**HOLY
UNION**