
CONFERRAL OF THE HONORARY DEGREE

DOCTOR OF HUMANITIES, *honoris causa*

James Healy, Ph.D.

For more than three decades, Dr. James Healy has served as the Director of the Office of Family Ministry of the Catholic Diocese of Joliet, Illinois, sharing his expertise and insight throughout the country and abroad, helping “tens of thousands of couples get married or stay married.” Throughout this time, he has also directed related family ministries, including baptism and work with divorced and widowed people.

Dr. Healy retired this past September, having served under three bishops and as an advisor to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Marriage and the Family. According to Joliet Diocese Bishop R. Daniel Conlon, “... Dr. Jim Healy...has ministered to and trained thousands in a vital component of our faith life--the domestic church. I am grateful for his expertise and his leadership these many years in family ministry, linking the journey of family life to the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ.”

A highly-regarded speaker, writer, and consultant, both nationally and internationally, Dr. Healy has presented extensively on topics related to marriage and family for more than ninety dioceses, at national conferences throughout the United States, and abroad. He has created widely-used writings on marriage, including “How to Be Married and Stay Engaged,” “Living Together and Christian Commitment,” “Spirituality and Religion in Your Marriage,” and “Making Happiness a Habit: Four Steps to a More Joyful Marriage.”

Drawing on his extensive experience and expertise, Dr. Healy has contributed chapters to numerous books on marriage and family ministry, including “Marriage Among the Spiritual but Not Religious,” in *Love One Another: Catholic Reflections on How to Sustain Marriages Today* (2010). His work has been featured in such magazines as *Family Perspectives*, *Catholic World*, *Liguorian*, *Marriage*, and *Deacon Digest*. Dr. Healy has also created online content for the United States Council of Catholic Bishops website, *For Your Marriage*; for the electronic newsletter for newly married couples, *First Day and For Ever*; and for Franciscan Media’s *Everyday Catholic*.

Dr. Healy also helped the Catholic Church respond to, as he describes, “the scourge of sexual abuse” by selecting and leading the program “Protecting God’s Children” in the Diocese of Joliet. “In the first year alone,” notes Dr. Healy, “we trained 21,000 clergy, staff, and volunteers in how to recognize and prevent child sexual abuse.”

Born in Decatur, Illinois and raised in Joliet, Dr. Healy entered the seminary as a high school student and continued through his college years at the College (now University) of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he received a B.A. in English with minors in

Theology and Philosophy. Indeed, not planning to marry but instead to become a priest, Dr. Healy notes, “Since I thought I would be a priest until I was age 22, marriage and parenthood were definitely not a given. When they arrived, marriage and parenthood came as unexpected and extraordinary gifts, and I still feel that way.”

Dr. Healy received his M.A. in the Social Sciences from the University of Chicago and his Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from the University of Illinois. As part of his educational training, he provided individual, couple, family, and group therapy for several organizations. Inspired by the example of influential mentors, who “showed...the powerful ways in which personal faith and psychology could intermingle,” Dr. Healy combined his grounding in Catholic formation with his educational background in psychology to serve the Church and its married couples and families.

Dr. Healy and his wife, Dr. Madonna Wojtaszek-Healy, who serves as Consultant for Special Needs to the Joliet diocesan Office of Youth Formation, have been married for thirty-five years. Reflecting on the blessing of his own marriage, Dr. Healy notes: “My marriage to my wife Madonna has been *the* most formative experience for the last thirty-five years of my life. The three transcendental values that bring us closer to God are beauty, truth, and goodness, and I was blessed to find all three in abundance in one person.”

Together they have raised four children and recently welcomed their first grandchild. Despite both his personal and professional experiences with marriage and family, Dr. Healy submits: “I still have a lot to learn about families, both personally and ministerially.”

Dr. Healy also served as the Region VII representative to the board of the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers (NACFLM), is national chair for its Scholarship Committee, and has served on numerous related committees for the organization over many years. In 2000, Dr. Healy was honored with the NACFLM Family Ministry Award.

For more than thirty years, Dr. Healy has served the Catholic marriage and family ministries of the Joliet Diocese with exceptional zeal, knowledge, and faith, reflecting the Catholic and Lasallian Mission values of Lewis University. His helpful and extensive writings and teachings, and his tremendous appreciation for the blessings of marriage and family, serve as a model for others similarly called.

For these and other pertinent reasons, we are most pleased and privileged to confer on Dr. James Healy, the degree of Doctor of Humanities, *honoris causa*, with all rights and privileges thereof. Done at Romeoville, Illinois, this 15th day of December, 2019.