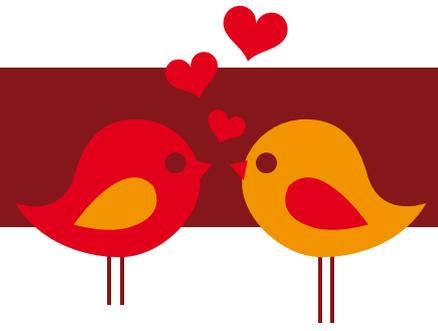


Celebrating



Saint Valentine

St Valentine's Day 2014

**Honouring marriage as
life-long romantic love**

A Resource for parishes and schools from
The Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life

Produced by the Australian Catholic Marriage and Family Council | www.acmfc.org.au

In a Nutshell

Aim of this resource:

- To encourage families, parishes and schools to build on the popularity of St Valentine's Day to affirm the value of romantic, married love.
- To provide practical suggestions for parishes and schools to celebrate St Valentine's Day.

This kit contains:

1. A reproducible leaflet 'Growing in Love' to be distributed to parishioners and families on the Sunday before St Valentine's Day.
2. Notes for a special St Valentine's Day liturgy.
3. Slides for use during the liturgy.
4. Newsletter inserts.
5. Tips for building a marriage friendly community.

How to Use this Resource

1. Reproduce the handout 'Growing in Love' the weekend before St Valentine's Day to distribute to families at Mass or via the school. Alternatively, some of the content of the handout could be included in the parish/school newsletter.
2. Use the Liturgy Notes to celebrate a dedicated Mass on Friday, Feb 14. Alternatively, use the notes to highlight marriage during the parish Mass on Sunday 9th or at a school assembly around the same time.
3. Use the newsletter clipboard for simple ways of supporting marriages through the newsletter.
4. Review the 'Tips for Building a Marriage Friendly Community' for ways that your parish or school could highlight the importance of marriage and utilise the giftedness of married couples.



Saint Valentine's Day

Friday, February 14th, 2014

Dear Friends,

In 2010, the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life launched the St Valentine's Day initiative. We are delighted to offer you our 2014 edition which continues our ongoing desire to use the innate joyfulness of the feast of St Valentine to promote and affirm marriage and life-long romantic love.

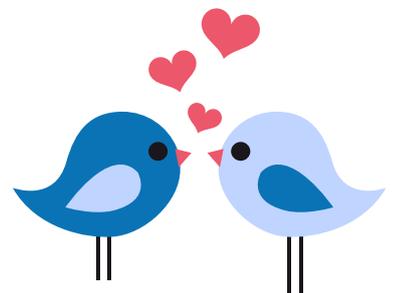
In a culture that is increasingly intolerant of Christian values and beliefs, feasts that have captured the imagination of the secular community, like St Valentine's Day, represent a unique opportunity for the Church. It is an opportunity for us to proclaim our beliefs in a way that is affirming and life-giving to deeply held values that are shared by many in the wider community. In doing so, we highlight the positive good that such values have and reinforce the need to protect them for the benefit of the whole community.

I invite you to use the resources enclosed to focus parish or school attention on the role of marriage on or around St Valentine's Day.

Yours in Christ,



Bishop Eugene Hurley
Chairman, Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life



Liturgy Outline

Introduction

This coming Friday is a popular day for those who are romantically minded. In our secular society, many people are unaware that St Valentine's Day is based on a legendary saint who was believed to have been a priest living in the third century in Rome under Emperor Claudius II. It is said that St Valentine was martyred for performing secret weddings against the decree of the Emperor. It was his compassion for young couples in love that earned him the title of patron of lovers.

We celebrate today not only the love shared by those couples among us, but also the love of the Great Lover, Jesus. Christ, our Bridegroom, invites us to join him in an everlasting covenant, an eternal love union that is reflected in the love of each and every dedicated married couple. [See the Fact File, page 4]

Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

Keep your family safe, O Lord, with unfailing care, that, relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace, we may be defended always by your protection.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

1: Isaiah 58: 7-10

Your light will rise in the darkness, and your shadows become like noon

Ps: 111: 4-9

R: The just man is a light in darkness to the upright.

2: 1 Corinthians 2: 1-5

Your faith should not depend on human philosophy but on the power of God

G: Matthew 5: 13-16

You are the light of the world.

Homily

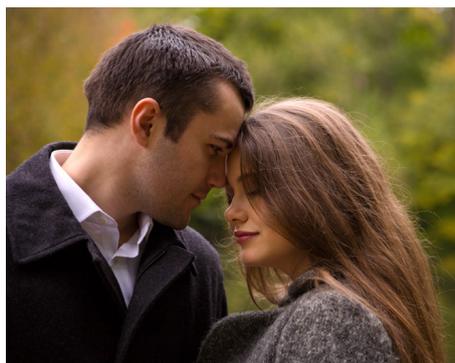
[See Homily Notes, page 3-4]

Prayers of the Faithful

Celebrant: Mindful of God's covenant of everlasting love, let us pray with hope and trust in the power of that love to transform our lives.

- For our parish/school community: that in this divided world we may be a sign of unity and an instrument of peace. We pray in faith.
- For the world in which we live; that in spite of all the obstacles and difficulties, the human family may grow in understanding and cooperation. We pray in faith.
- For those who are preparing for marriage: that they may build a relationship of intimacy and tenderness for which we all long. We pray in faith.
- For married couples: that they may rejoice with one another in moments of strength and be compassionate towards one another in moments of weakness. We pray in faith.
- For those who have suffered broken promises: that they may find healing and peace. We pray in faith.
- For widowed people: may the gifts of love, support, courage and hope be made present to them within this community. We pray in faith.
- For all here present: that this celebration may encourage us to persevere in the way of love. We pray in faith.

Celebrant: Heavenly Father, may the radiance of your love light up our hearts. May we know and experience your presence with us as we journey joyfully and courageously in the ways of love. We ask this through Christ our Lord.



Suggestions for Sunday 9th Feb | 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

As St Valentine's Day 2014 occurs on a Friday, this liturgy outline is drafted for the purposes of supplementing the Eucharistic Celebrations on the previous Sunday – Feb 9th. Alternatively, for those commemorating the feast with a dedicated Mass or Prayer Liturgy on Friday Feb 14th, we recommend you consult 2012 edition of the St Valentine's Day Resource Kits available at www.acmfc.org.au

Blessing of Couples

Invite the married & engaged couples to stand and/or come to the sanctuary for a blessing. Have the congregation extend their hand over the couples as the priest says...

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let us turn to the Lord and pray that He will continue to bless your marriages with His grace.

Father, look with tenderness upon your daughters gathered here; give them love, grace and peace. May they always follow the example of the holy women whose praises are sung in the scriptures.

Bless your sons gathered in your name; may they always have the strength and compassion which comes from the Gospel.

Together, may each couple continue to both praise you in their gladness and turn to you in their troubles so that you may fill them with the joy of salvation. Keep them faithful in their marriages, and let them be living examples of Christian love.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Don't forget the Powerpoint slides!

Liturgy Notes

Homily Notes

You are the Light of the World!

The Gospel reminds us that discipleship requires a certain boldness. Jesus uses the everyday items of salt and light to illustrate his call to be witnesses to God's love. Salt is not only tasty, it also preserves food. Being able to preserve food in salt was important for the people of the time, as refrigeration wasn't an option. If it loses its saltiness, it also loses its ability to preserve. It loses its usefulness.

Similarly, a light is only useful if it can be seen. It is useless if it is hidden under a tub. But if it is on a lamp-stand, its light shines throughout the house for everyone.

God gives us many things; talents, gifts for living, family, health and so on, but these are not solely for our own pleasure. God calls us to use all that we have to proclaim his kingdom.

How do we do this? In the first reading, Isaiah gives us some ideas: share your bread with the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, look after your own kin, and give relief to the oppressed. This is God's love in action working through us. Our good works, come not from our own resources, but from the grace and the gifts that God first gave us.

In our world today, many people, ourselves included, are trapped in the darkness of sin. Sometimes through addictions, selfishness or simple bad habits, we can lose sight of God's love and the life he calls us to live. The example of someone who lives faithfully, who practices compassion, who reaches out in kindness to us in our time of darkness, can make all the difference – restoring our hope and drawing us back into the circle of light and love.

[Give an example of someone you know, or know of, who used their gifts to shed light into the darkness at a time when you really needed it.]

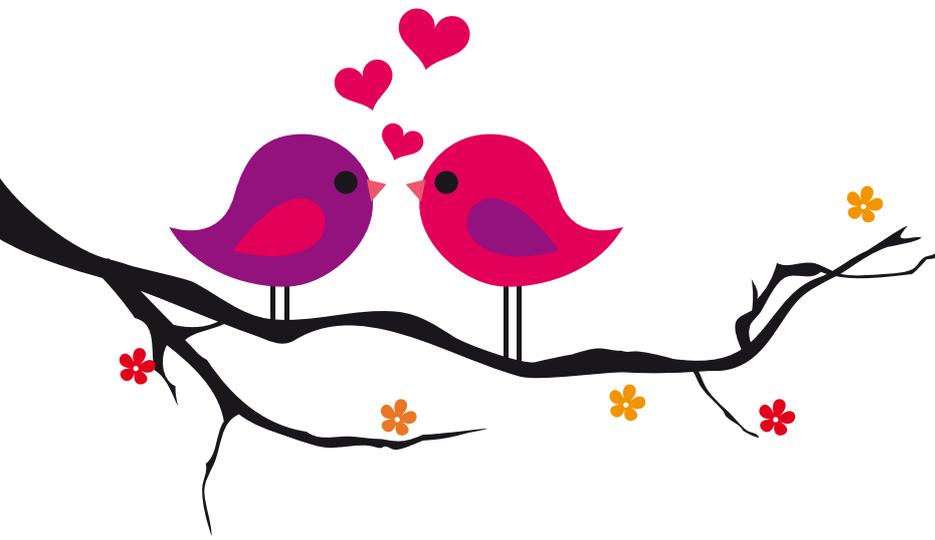
When we do good works in the name of God, we are using our gifts according to their purpose – to glorify God and encourage others to come closer to him.

St Valentine

Later this week, we celebrate the feast of St Valentine. It's a popular event in the secular community with a vast commercial industry backing it. It is worth remembering however, that St Valentine was a real person, a Roman priest in the 4th Century. How was he salt and light in the world?

St Valentine apparently had quite a heart for young couples. When the Emperor Claudius II banned all weddings so as to more effectively recruit single young men into his army, St Valentine risked his life to marry young couples in secret. He used his resources to shed light into the despair of these desperate couples. And later, while he was imprisoned and awaiting execution, he restored the sight of the daughter of his jailor – she experienced light for the very first time through his healing.

Cont'd overleaf



Homily Notes cont.

Marriage as a Light to the World

We know that as a sacrament, Marriage also is a light; it illuminates an aspect of God that is fundamental to our understanding. Marriage helps us to 'see' the loving intimacy between the Father, Son and Spirit. Just as the Father gives himself totally to Jesus, the Son, so does Jesus give himself without reservation to the Father, and from their union, the Holy Spirit proceeds giving life to the world. In a similar way, a husband gives himself totally to his wife, as she responds with her own gift of self to him, and from their union, new life springs forth.

It is a great mystery, but we can start to understand it, by reflecting on the union between a husband and wife.

That gives husbands and wives a great responsibility. Your marriage is a gift from God. And God calls you to be a 'light to the world' – a beacon of hope witnessing to the reality of the intimate union of Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the living manifestation of Love and source of all love in the world.

Growing in Love

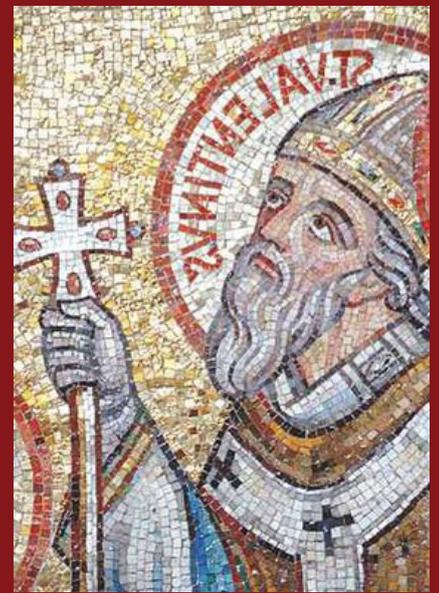
That's why it's so vital for us to acknowledge the significance of marriage in our community. It's also important for couples to be committed to deepening their love and understanding of their sacrament. One way to do this is through developing a habit of couple prayer.

It's not easy to make time for God in our busy lives, especially when you have young children. And if it's hard to make time for personal prayer, it's even harder to make time for couple prayer. However, I really want to encourage you to try it. Your couple prayer time doesn't need to be long or complicated – even just the Lord's Prayer a few times a week is a start. Then gradually increase it.

The handout for this year's St Valentine's Day gives some practical tips for getting started in Couple Prayer. There is a link there to a resource for a Forty-Day kick start – what a great way to prepare for Easter throughout Lent which starts in a few weeks! Even if your spouse is not a Catholic, I encourage you to think about giving it a try.

Concluding Thoughts

Jesus calls us to be light for the world. That applies to every Christian and is a call to use our various gifts to do good works so that God's glory and love might be visible in the world. St Valentine is one of many great examples of men and women who have been a light in the world. As a Sacrament, marriage is another good example of being 'light' – but in order to be a strong light, our marriages need to be nurtured and Couple Prayer is one, powerful way to do that.



St Valentine

Fact File

Today we celebrate St Valentine's Day – a feast that rejoices in romantic love and lifelong marriage. In many countries of the world, the feast coincides with Marriage Week.

St Valentine was a priest in Rome at the time of Emperor Claudius II. His association with young lovers is well known even in modern times. The story goes that Claudius, urgent to recruit soldiers for his armies, decreed that all weddings be suspended so as to encourage more single men without family responsibilities to serve in combat. Seeing the anguish of young couples forbidden to marry, St Valentine performed secret weddings in defiance of the Emperor.

Another legend holds that while awaiting his execution, St Valentine restored the sight of his jailer's blind daughter. On the eve of his death, he is reported to have penned a farewell note to the young girl signing it, "From your Valentine".

He was beheaded on February 14, 269 AD and buried on the Flaminian Way where archaeologists have unearthed a catacomb and an ancient church dedicated in his name. He is the Patron Saint of engaged couples, happy marriages, love and lovers.

We celebrate today not only the love shared by those couples among us, but also the love of the Great Lover, Jesus. Christ, our bridegroom, invites us to join him in an everlasting covenant; an eternal love union that is reflected in the love of each and every dedicated married couple.

ref: www.catholic.org/saints

Newsletter Clipboard

Tips for Couples

Give your spouse a St Valentine's date he/she will remember: revisit one of your early romantic encounters (e.g. first date, proposal etc). Plan the whole date: organise a baby-sitter, bring refreshments and nourishment, photos, music and let the romance flow!

Practice Gratitude

Thank a married couple for the gift of their sacrament

Thank your spouse or fiancé for their love and self-giving.

Tips for Couples

Make St Valentine's Day last all year. Plan twelve dates on or near to the 14th of each month. Make sure each date includes time to share what's happening in your life together.

St Valentine's Day

Wishing our faithful married couples a joyful St Valentine's Day. Thank you for your example of love.

Tips for Couples

Make St Valentine's Day something special this year. Instead of flowers or chocolates, give the gift of your presence. Make a commitment to set aside 10 minutes a day to share the highs and lows together.

Resources for Parishes & Schools

Many dioceses have a marriage office or council that offers marriage resources for parishes and schools. For local information, visit:

www.catholic.org.au

In addition, there are a number of Catholic organisations and movements that provide resources to strengthen marriage and assist couples to discover their sacramental potential.

Australian Catholic Marriage and Family Council
www.acmfc.org.au

Catholic Society for Marriage Education
www.csme.catholic.org.au

Christian Family Movement
www.cfm.org

Couples for Christ
www.cfcaustralia.org
www.cfc-australia.org.au

For Your Marriage - US Bishops
www.foryourmarriage.org

Marriage Resource Centre
www.MarriageRC.org

New Families Movement of the Focolare
www.focolare.org

Schönenstatt
www.schoenstatt.org.au

SmartLoving Series
www.SmartLoving.org

Teams – a Movement for Married Spirituality
www.teamsoceania.com.au

Worldwide Marriage Encounter
www.wwme.org.au



Building a Marriage-friendly Community

The most important part of a marriage-friendly community is cultivating an affirming and empowering mentality towards married couples. They are a tremendous resource in proclaiming the gospel. They are not simply another group with pastoral needs; they are a key resource for evangelisation. Try these ideas to empower and enliven marriage in your community.

1. Have an annual 'Celebration of Marriage' to affirm couples and the giftedness of marriage, e.g. St Valentine's Day (Feb 14), Marriage Week, or National Marriage Day (Aug 13 in Australia).
2. Celebrate significant wedding anniversaries – have a regular 'Congratulations' column in the parish/school newsletter, invite couples celebrating an anniversary to be blessed by the community at Mass, or have a special annual Mass to which couples could be personally invited.
3. Ask a couple (or several) to give a short testimony on how God has blessed them through their marriage. They could share it at an appropriate time during the Sunday liturgy or it could be published in the community newsletter.
4. Invite couples (rather than individual spouses) to take up ministry or be members of the parish pastoral council or school parent council. Couples bring a special charism to the children's liturgy, youth group, welcoming team, bereavement ministry, or pastoral planning. Seek out those who have a vibrant sense of their sacramental witness for leadership.
5. Establish a parish 'marriage and family ministry' team to plan and execute marriage initiatives in the community. For more info: rmpirola@ozemail.com.au
6. Make information about marriage strengthening resources available to parishioners through the newsletter, notice board and parish web site.
7. Combine resources with the parishes/schools in your deanery to host a marriage enrichment event (such as couples retreat or weekend workshop).
8. Sponsor a couple to represent the parish/school at a marriage conference or marriage education training course. Make sure they share their experience with the community on their return.
9. Invite couples to a movie night with a positive marriage message (e.g. Fireproof, The Story of Us).
10. Purchase some marriage resources for the parish lending library, e.g. Holy Sex (Gregory Popcak), Good News about Sex and Marriage (Christopher West), Marriage 911 (Greg and Julie Alexander).
11. Run a Theology of the Body Study Group for couples of your community. (Resources available from www.marriageresourcecentre.org/shop).
12. Invite a couple to speak about the vocation of marriage to the youth group, senior school classes or the RCIA group.

Tips to Celebrate St Valentine's Day

1. Talk about SAINT Valentine's Day, rather than simply Valentine's Day – it is after all a feast based on the life of a saint!
2. Honour married couples with a special Mass, or when the feast falls on a weekend, at the Sunday Masses.
3. Mark the occasion with a simple celebration after the Sunday Mass (e.g. a glass of champagne, a St Vals cake, wine and cheese)
4. Suggest that parish couples make a group booking at a local restaurant to celebrate together and support each other.
5. Host a parish dinner for parish couples - include the married and engaged.

