

Text of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference Newsletter No. 3

The Meaning of Marriage

Bishops' Pastoral Statement *The Meaning of Marriage*

“As Catholics, it is not sufficient for us to talk about the importance of family. We also have a responsibility to do all that we can do to offer practical support for marriage and family in our parish communities, in our liturgies and our pastoral action and as individual members of society, through our social and political actions. In seeking to reaffirm the unique value to children and society of the mutual and complementary roles of a mother and father, we ask that the principle of equality not be undermined by applying it inappropriately to two fundamentally different types of relationship. Marriage is a unique relationship different from all others for a reason.” Please read the full text of *The Meaning of Marriage* which is available in English, Irish and Polish on www.catholicbishops.ie

Marriage is important—Reflect before you change it

Marriage is of fundamental importance for children, mothers and fathers, and society – all of us need to reflect deeply before changing it. Ahead of the referendum in May, bishops ask the faithful to carefully consider:

- that the union of a man and a woman in marriage, open to the procreation of children, is a gift from God who created us male and female.
- that reason points to the truth about human sexuality that makes the relationship between a man and a woman unique.
- that mothers and fathers bring different, yet complementary gifts and strengths into a child's life.
- the profound implications which this constitutional amendment would have on the family environment and on our understanding of parenthood.

Protecting marriage is a matter of justice

“Religious and non-religious people alike have long acknowledged and know from their experience that the family, based on the marriage of a woman and a man, is the best and ideal place for children. It is a fundamental building block of society which makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the common good. It is therefore deserving of special recognition and promotion by the State. Proposals to change the meaning of marriage effectively say to parents, children and society that the State should not, and will not, promote any normative or ideal family environment for raising children. It therefore implies that the biological bond and natural ties between a child and its mother and father have no intrinsic value for the child or for society.”

(Excerpt from *The Meaning of Marriage* pastoral statement)

“We must reaffirm the right of children to grow up in a family with a father and a mother capable of creating a suitable environment for the child's development and emotional maturity.” - Pope Francis.

Copies of the Catholic Bishops' pastoral statement *The Meaning of Marriage* are still available at the back of the church.



ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH
O'Connell Avenue
Limerick
Sunday 5th April 2015
Easter Sunday

Fr Oliver Plunkett, Adm:..... (061)313401/ 087-6593176
 Fr Frank Downes OP, Parish Chaplain | Fr Paul Finnerty, Weekend Assistant
 St Joseph's Church (Sacristy): Úna McCarthy (Parish Clerk):.....(061)313401
 Parish email:.....stjosephsparishlk@eircom.net
 Website: www.stjosephsparish.ie

Mass Times and Intentions

Day	Time	Name
Sat. Apr. 4 th	9.00pm	Easter Vigil and First Mass of Easter Gerry Ryan (month's mind)
Sun. Apr. 5 th	10.00am	Easter Sunday
	11.30am	
	5.30pm	
Mon. Apr. 6 th	10.30am	Molly O'Sullivan
Tue. Apr. 7 th	10.30am	Tom Moore
Wed. Apr. 8 th	10.30am	
Thur. Apr. 9 th	10.30am	
Fri. Apr. 10 th	10.30am	
Sat. Apr. 11 th	10.30am	Bridget Power
Sun. Apr. 12 th	10.00am	Nancy O'Farrell
	11.30am	Eamonn Hamilton (second anniversary), and Treasa and Edward Hamilton; Úna Blake and Dermot Cronin; Michael Healy (25 th anniversary); John Quinn (month's mind); Nora and Gus Ward, and Jack McCarthy
	5.30pm	Deceased members of the Royal British Legion; Margaret Stewart (month's mind)
On the web: ●Parish: www.stjosephsparish.ie ●Diocese: www.limerickdiocese.org ●Diocese on Facebook: www.facebook.com/dioceseflimerick An electronic version of this newsletter may be seen on our website. Newsletter prepared by Cathal McCarthy		

Last Sunday's Collections

Thank you for your offerings to us on last Sunday, March 29th.
 Offertory Collection €860.83 and Restoration Fund €302.26.

Recently Baptised

We congratulate and ask God's blessing on Mark and Michelle Fitzgerald on the baptism of their son Alexander Robert.

Thanks for all the Help

It takes a lot of organising and hard work to prepare the church for the Easter ceremonies and to arrange these ceremonies. We extend our thanks to all those who have contributed; to those who distributed the Easter dues envelopes and the accompanying leaflets; to those who turned out last Tuesday to help in the "big cleanup", to those who prepared the representation of the tomb, the floral display, and other symbols of Easter tide; to the readers of the word, the Eucharistic ministers, the choirs, and to those who helped with the bagpacking at Tesco's on Wednesday which yielded €790.70 for the Restoration Fund.

Redefining Marriage

Journalist Breda O'Brien of the Iona Institute will be speaking in the Clarion Hotel on this coming Wednesday, 8th April, at 8pm giving reasons as to why marriage should not be redefined. All are welcome.

Education and Well-Being of the Older Person

Two new programmes—The Masters Programme on the Education and Well-Being of the Older Person and the Certificate on the Education and Well-Being of the Older Person are set to run in Mary Immaculate College in September. Core modules common to both programmes include *Ageing Society and Sociology of Ageing*, *Physiology and Psychology of Ageing*, and *Education and the Older Person*. They are the only such programmes of their kind in the country. For further information visit www.mic.ul.ie or contact the programme director at liz.early@mic.ul.ie or T: (061)204712. The application deadline is May 30th.

Enrich your Marriage on a Marriage Encounter Weekend.

Spend a weekend away discovering the full potential of your marriage. Enjoy real quality time together free from external pressures and interruptions. Develop a new way of sharing your thoughts and feelings with your husband or wife. Irrespective of how long you are married, this is a unique weekend experience that every good marriage deserves. The next Marriage Encounter Weekend will be from the 17th to 19th April (8:00pm Friday to 4:30pm Sunday) at the Cork International Hotel, Cork. For information and bookings visit: www.marriageencounter.ie, or phone 086 8334382 or 087 2162436

Message from the Mid-West Branch of the Parkinson's Association

This year *Parkinson's Awareness Week* will run from 6th to 11th April and as part of this the Mid-West Branch of the Parkinson's Association will hold a Fundraising Coffee Morning at Bobby Byrne's Wolfe Tone Bar on Thursday 9th April next from 10am to 12 noon. This is part of our continuous and ongoing efforts to raise much needed funding—we do not receive any state support. There are approximately 450 people in the Mid-West who suffer with Parkinson's disease. The Mid-West Branch is run by voluntary effort so all monies raised are used for the provision of services for patients. The services include information meetings addressed by guest speakers with specialist knowledge of Parkinson's disease; Physical Therapy, Hydrotherapy, and Speech Therapy through the medium of singing. The support of the public would be greatly appreciated on the 9th April at Bobby's. All are welcome.

The Easter Vigil

An annual celebration of the Lord's resurrection goes back to the first generation of Christianity. For the first three centuries this was the only feast observed throughout the church. This original celebration of what would become Easter was done by way of a vigil (Latin *vigilia*, "a watch," or "waiting"). It was natural that Christians chose the night hours to celebrate their religious experience of a Christ victorious over death and sin and their victory along with his. It was during those dark hours, turning into the first day of the week (Sunday), that this mystery had occurred (Matthew 28:11; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). It was a common belief in early Christianity that the risen Lord would return during these night hours of the Easter Vigil. It was natural, therefore, that all be present and waiting. This would be his final and glorious coming, and the end of time still proclaimed today with faith during each Mass: "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again!"

With some modifications, especially in length, today's renewed ritual echoes that of early centuries. As soon as the evening star became visible, the night-long ritual began. The first hours were spent in Scripture readings and prayers. The readings from Scripture, usually twelve in all, emphasized a prophetic theme of a new creation and salvation through water, such as the story of creation, the fall, the flood, the sacrifice of Isaac, the Passover, the crossing of the "Red Sea," and the entry into the Promised Land.

As the hours of the night unfolded, this theme was ritualized in a new creation through the waters of baptism, especially the baptism of adults. This ritual, which gave a distinct theme to the Easter Vigil, began with the solemn blessing of the Easter water, with a chanting of the Litany of Saints, by plunging the lit Easter Candle into the water, and by mixing it with holy oils. Then the catechumens who had been in preparation, sometimes for years, renounced Satan's influence on their former lives, confessed their faith, and were baptized, anointed, and dressed in white robes. By the 5th century, in the Roman church, a second anointing, or chrismation, was done by the bishop. This would evolve into the sacrament of confirmation.

During the first centuries it was a tradition to give blessed milk and honey to those newly baptized. This gesture symbolized that the newly baptized were infants in the faith, called neophytes. It also symbolized their having just crossed over into the new Promised Land flowing with milk and honey. This practice, marking an important moment in life, was borrowed from pagan mystery cults.

Finally, as the hours of vigil approached dawn, the newly baptized shared the Eucharist for the first time with the community of believers.

[From *Catholic Customs and Tradition: a Popular Guide* by Greg Dues]

Prayer for Married Couples

We thank you, O God, for the love you have implanted in our hearts.

May it inspire us to be kind in our words, considerate of feelings and concerned with each other's feelings and wishes. Help us to be understanding and forgiving of human weakness and failings. Bless our marriage, O God, with peace and happiness, and make our love fruitful for your glory and our joy both here and in eternity.

Amen

[Prayer by Stephen Cummins from *The Family Prayer Book*]

(This prayer is part of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference newsletter. The text of the main body of the bishops' newsletter is on the back page of this newsletter.)