

**Celebrating**

# **V** Saint Valentine

## **St Valentine's Day 2013**

**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](http://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 'Gratitude' 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 (Thurs Feb 14, 2013).
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 'Gratitude' 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 Thurs Feb 14. Alternatively, use the notes to highlight marriage during the parish Mass on Sunday 10th 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

Thursday, February 14th, 2013

Dear Friends,

In 2010, the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life launched the St Valentine's Day initiative. We are delighted to offer you our 2013 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 Thursday 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 6:1-2,3-8

*I heard the voice of the Lord saying: "Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?"*

### Ps: 137:1-5,7-8

*R: In the sight of the angels I will sing your Praises.*

### 2: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

*I hardly deserve the name apostle; but by God's grace that is what I am, and the grace he gave me has not been fruitless.*

### G: Luke 5:1-11

*Put out into deep water and pay out your nets for a catch.*

## 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 10th Feb | 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

As St Valentine's Day 2013 occurs in Lent, this liturgy outline is drafted for the purposes of supplementing the Eucharistic Celebrations on the previous Sunday – Feb 10th. Alternatively, for those commemorating the feast with a dedicated Mass or Prayer Liturgy on Thursday Feb 14th, we recommend you consult previous editions of the St Valentine's Day Resource Kits available at [www.acmfc.org.au](http://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.**

# Liturgy Notes

## Homily Notes

### **Gratitude: In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.**

The psalm today is full of praises for God. The psalmist thanks, blesses, adores and gives glory to the Lord for the Lord's faithfulness, love and responsiveness. His gratitude is overflowing; with everything in his being, he gives the Lord praise.

Gratitude is one of the most important virtues we can develop. In our faith life, gratitude helps us to pray. Like the psalmist, a grateful heart will not be silenced; it is compelled to give voice to its urgent longing to praise the Lord. In fact, gratitude is at the very heart of prayer calling us to fall deeper in love with our Lord.

Gratitude is also important to our human relationships. Gratitude leads us to look for the good in each other rather than the faults. It helps us to find ways to embrace our differences with good humour rather than argue about them. And it motivates us to serve each other because we feel blessed and privileged to know and love the other.

One of the most effective ways to transform any relationship is to consciously cultivate an attitude of gratitude. Gratitude is a powerful force; it changes the way we relate to others and it changes the way we perceive our situation. A habit of gratitude is like putting on a pair of x-ray glasses – it equips us to see past the superficial behaviour of others into their heart so that we see their brokenness as well as their true beauty.

A well-developed sense of gratitude is one of the distinguishing characteristics of happy couples. With St Valentine's day occurring later this week, we can be sure that there will be lots of focus on romance among our couples. As the St Valentine's Day handout notes, gratitude is an essential virtue for marital happiness, helping couples to build joyful marriages where they can tolerate each other's imperfections and celebrate their differences.

[Give an example of a couple who have well developed gratitude. Share how they joyfully praise each other, look for the good in the other, are quick to overlook faults and to forgive mistakes.]

### **Whom shall I send?**

Both the first reading and the gospel explore the theme of mission. In Isaiah we hear how the Lord calls out, 'Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?' Isaiah, despite his 'wretched state' responds: 'Here I am, send me.' We know from the scriptures that Isaiah became one of Israel's great prophets carrying God's message throughout the land and inspiring us over two millennia later.

**Don't forget the Powerpoint slides!**

## Homily Notes cont.

In another story, the Gospel, we hear how Jesus called his disciples to 'put out into deep water and pay out your nets for a catch'. Though they were disillusioned, weary and doubtful, they obeyed the Lord's command. To their surprise and joy, God rewarded their faithfulness with a bountiful catch, way beyond their expectations. Simon Peter, overcome with gratitude, declares himself a sinful man, unworthy of the Lord's generosity. Yet Jesus promises Peter an even more spectacular catch: 'Do not be afraid; from now on it is men you will catch.'

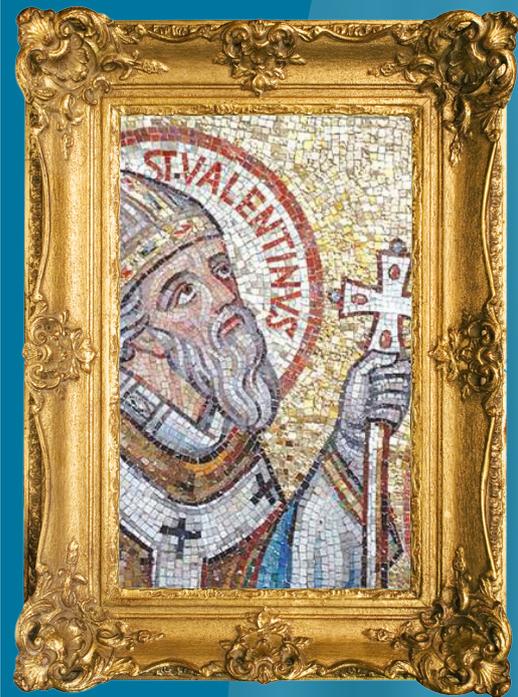
God also speaks those words to us: 'Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?'

[Talk about a time when you heard God calling you to be 'his messenger'? It might be the story of your vocation to the priesthood, or a simpler story such as responding to the prompting of the spirit to speak to a stranger, to speak out for God in a hostile environment, to reach out and help someone in need etc]

## Concluding thoughts

In a world of widespread desecration of sexuality and marriage, the relatable love of married couples is a powerful sign of hope for others. So Christian couples are called to seek more than merely average marriages; they are called to be exceptional, to be vibrant, potent witnesses to the reality of life-long, faithful love. The world needs your example, the church needs you, we priests need you.

Like all vocations, married couples need formation and renewal in order to maximise their sacramental witness and reach the full potential of joy and sacramental impact. On this St Valentine's Day, a feast in which the Church honours the importance of romantic love in marriage, may all married couples know the importance of nurturing their romance for the benefit of the community.



## 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](http://www.catholic.org/saints)

Saint Valentine's Day

# 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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](http://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](http://www.acmfc.org.au)

### Catholic Society for Marriage Education

[www.csme.catholic.org.au](http://www.csme.catholic.org.au)

### Christian Family Movement

[www.cfm.org](http://www.cfm.org)

### Couples for Christ

[www.cfc-australia.org](http://www.cfc-australia.org)

### For Your Marriage - US Bishops

[www.foryourmarriage.org](http://www.foryourmarriage.org)

### Marriage Resource Centre

[www.MarriageRC.org](http://www.MarriageRC.org)

### New Families Movement of the Focolare

[www.focolare.org](http://www.focolare.org)

### Schöenstatt

[www.schoenstatt.org.au](http://www.schoenstatt.org.au)

### SmartLoving Series

[www.SmartLoving.org](http://www.SmartLoving.org)

### Retrouvaille

[www.retrouvaille.org](http://www.retrouvaille.org)

### Teams – a Movement for Married Spirituality

[www.tol-oceania.catholic.org.au](http://www.tol-oceania.catholic.org.au)

### Worldwide Marriage Encounter

[www.teamsoceania.com.au](http://www.teamsoceania.com.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 'marriage and family ministry' team to plan and execute marriage initiatives in the community. For more info: [www.marriagerc.org](http://www.marriagerc.org)
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. Threshold magazine subscription (CSME), Holy Sex (Gregory Popcak), Good News about Sex and Marriage (Christopher West).
11. Run a Theology of the Body Study Group for couples of your community. (Resources available from [www.marriageresourcecentre.org/shop](http://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.

