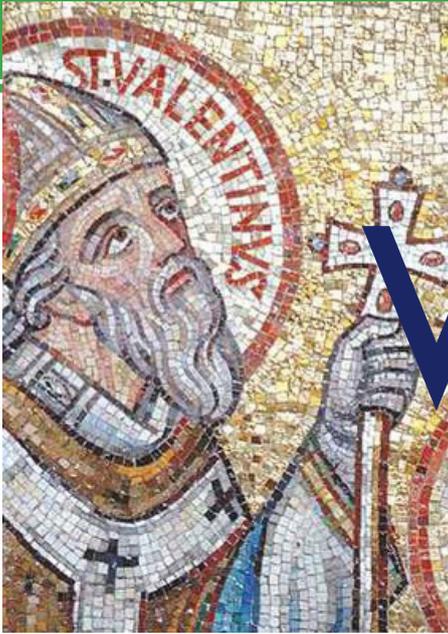


Celebrating



Saint
VALENTINE



St Valentine's Day 2015

**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 Saturday, Feb 14. Alternatively, use the notes to highlight marriage during the parish Mass on Sunday 15th 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

Saturday, February 14th, 2015

Dear Friends,

In 2010, the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life launched the St Valentine's Day initiative. We are delighted to offer you our 2015 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.

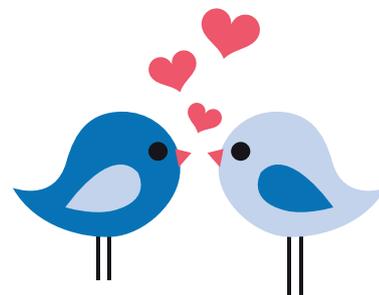
In a culture that is increasingly intolerant of Christian values and beliefs, feasts that have captured the imagination of the secular community, like St Valentine's Day, represent a unique opportunity for the Church. It is an opportunity for joyful support for deeply held life-giving values that are 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.

In this period of reflection between two Synods on the Family, I invite you to use the resources enclosed to focus parish or school attention on the beauty and importance of marriage.

Yours in Christ,



Bishop Eugene Hurley Chairman,
Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life



Liturgy Outline

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Introduction

February 14th 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 3]

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: Leviticus 13: 1-2, 44-46

The leper will dwell apart, making an abode outside the camp.

Ps: 32

R: I turn to you Lord, in time of trouble and you fill me with the joy of salvation.

2: 1 Corinthians 10:31-11

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

G: Mark 1:40-45

Jesus Cleanses a Leper.

Homily

[See Homily Notes, page 3]

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 15th Feb | 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

As St Valentine's Day 2015 occurs on a Saturday, this liturgy outline is drafted for the purposes of supplementing the Eucharistic Celebrations on the following Sunday – Feb 15th. Alternatively, for those commemorating the feast with a dedicated Mass or Prayer Liturgy on Saturday Feb 14th, we recommend you consult the 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

The following points regarding St Valentine's Day are provided as possible additional comments to any resource used for the readings of the day.

St Valentine

Yesterday (Saturday), we celebrated the feast of St Valentine. It has become 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; and one who has lessons for us today

St Valentine had quite a heart for young couples. We understand that 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. For these Christian couples, their choice was to either wait in frustration or to live together without marriage and outside God's Law. Later, while he was imprisoned and awaiting execution, rather than despising his jailors, he restored the sight of one of their young daughters.

1600 years later the work of St Valentine is a valuable reminder of the importance of marriage in our world. It is also an important reminder to you husbands and wives that you have a great responsibility. Your marriage and family is to be a living example of God's love in action. Your marriage is Sacramental and as a Church we need you to live your marriage as a loving witness.

There are many challenges facing marriage and family life in today's world; the topic under discussion at next October's Synod on the Family.

Strengthening Marriage

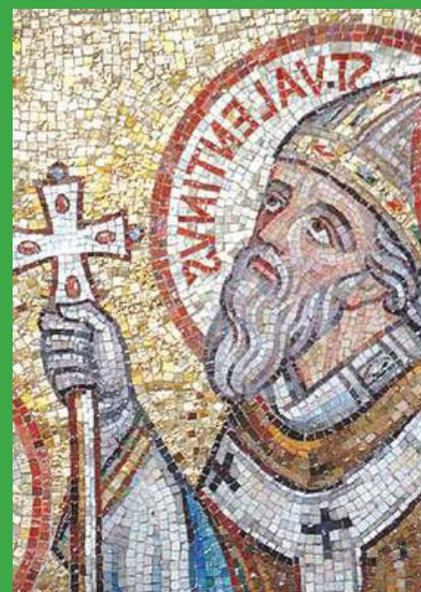
It is important for us to acknowledge the importance of marriage in our community. It's also important for Catholic couples to be committed to deepening their love and strengthening their bond.

This year, the focus of the St Valentine's Day handout is Couple Fun. That may seem like a strange topic for the Church to be promoting, but here's the rationale. When marriages are troubled or family life is just really busy, one of the first casualties is couple fun. Couples who are struggling have often lost the capacity to enjoy each other's company. They simply don't have fun together any more. And this has serious consequences, because enjoying life together bonds you. That's true of every relationship and it's true of marriage. Moreover, a couple with a strong bond who regularly has fun together is a far more attractive and joyful witness of God's love. Pope Francis constantly calls Catholics to be joyful, and what could be more joyful than a couple in love having fun together.

I know that it's not easy to make time for fun in your busy lives, especially when you have young children. And if it's hard to make time for personal recreation, it's even harder to make time for couple fun. However, I really want to encourage you to prioritise it. Don't see this as an indulgence. Couple fun is a kingdom building activity because the stronger, more joy-filled your relationship, the more effective you are in proclaiming the Gospel.

Concluding Thoughts

St Valentine is one of many great reminders that as a Sacrament, married couples are also called to witness to the liberating nature of God's Law as they reach out to others on the margins of faith. But it won't be an effective witness if it's not joyful. And that's where couple fun is a serious endeavour!



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

Couple Fun

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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 (Australia) Global Mission Inc
www.cfcaustralia.org
Couples for Christ Oceania Mission Ltd
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

Schönstatt
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 (Sept), 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.

