

MASS OF THANKSGIVING FOR MATRIMONY

VIGIL OF PENTECOST 2015

WELCOME FROM CARDINAL VINCENT NICHOLS
ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

I extend to each of you the warmest welcome to this Mass of Thanksgiving especially as you are celebrating significant and jubilee anniversaries during 2015. Your presence represents all spouses across the diocese who bear faithful witness to the Church's vision of married love.

As you know we gather for this year's unique celebration at a time of important focus on marriage and family in the life of the Church, initiated by our Holy Father Pope Francis and invoking the grace of the Holy Spirit to give us wisdom and courage. Wisdom and courage are key virtues, indeed indispensable fruits of the Holy Spirit, without which no Christian marriage could survive and thrive. These fruits may ebb and flow through the tides and storms of your lives together. But each of you will know, I am sure, that as you look back over your years, being wise and courageous is what has kept you going, kept you united.

There is no such thing as a perfect marriage. But Christian marriages, striving to be like Christ, are undoubtedly on the way to perfection. This is why I invited people earlier this year to send me their prayerful insights in response to the reflection document; *The Call, the Journey and the Mission*. If you were among those who responded to that invitation, I thank you wholeheartedly. For now it will be of great help to me and my fellow bishops as we continue to ponder on the Church's pastoral care of the family.

I would like today to issue another invitation. At the back of this booklet you will see a whole list of various apostolates, resources and initiatives within the diocese that support marriage and the family. I would like to draw your particular attention to the initiative called 'Explore.' Using volunteer couples, *Explore* brings about dialogue between a married couple and a group of teenagers in which the realities of married love and lifelong commitment are shared and explored. I am delighted that this project is now underway in our diocesan Secondary Schools and Colleges. It is essential to inspire young people now to aspire to a lifelong married love in the future. This is remote marriage preparation at its best. We urgently need couples willing to volunteer to join this venture. Your turn would come around only a few times a year. Please do consider it if you can help. It is a great source of marriage enrichment for those who take part; it's really not as daunting as it sounds! More details will be available after Mass.

May I wish you every joy and happiness on your anniversary and leave you with the words of Pope Francis:

'Each one of us has a treasure inside... If we keep it there, closed up, it will stay there. If we share it with others, the treasure will multiply with the treasures that come from others. What I want to ask of you is that you do not hide the treasure that each of you has.'

✠ Vincent