

ADULT EDUCATION AND EVANGELISATION
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE



A FUTURE *full of*

HOPE



"Every encounter with Christ, who in sacraments gives us salvation, invites us to 'go' and communicate to others the salvation that we have been able to see, to touch, to encounter and to receive and which is truly credible because it is love."

Pope Francis, General Audience, 6 November 2013



MARRIAGE WEEK

Friday 24 June - Saturday 2 July 2022

A FUTURE
FULL OF HOPE
CLIFTON DIOCESE

MARRIAGE WEEK

Friday 24th June 2022 until Saturday 2nd July 2022

You are made for each other ...

Man and woman were made 'for each other'. Not that God left them half made and incomplete: he created them to be a communion of persons, in which each can be 'helpmate' to the other, for they are equal as persons and complimentary as masculine and feminine. In marriage God unites them in such a way, that by forming 'one flesh' (Genesis 2:24) they can transmit human life: 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth' (Genesis 1:28). By transmitting human life to their descendants, man and woman as spouses and parents cooperate in a unique way in the Creator's work (Gaudium et Spes, 50).

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 372

Our theme for this week-long celebration of marriage is 'ACCOMPANIMENT IN LIFE AND LOVE'.

In this booklet we offer suggestions on ways to pray with your partner and some ideas for couples and families to help nurture your spiritual life and grow in love together. We also offer some ideas for celebrating as a parish, such as, setting up a prayer room in your church building or parish hall, holding a social evening for couples, or a wedding feast for the whole community and some tips for hosting a watch party. Also, within this booklet are the readings for each day, a prayer, and a question to reflect upon.

Bishop Declan is celebrating Mass at Clifton Cathedral on Saturday the 2nd of July at midday and is inviting all married couples to join him. More information on the celebration of Marriage Mass can be found at the back of this booklet.

Ways to pray with your partner

Prayer lies at the heart of Christian life. The harvest that will come from having a prayer routine will bless your marriage, deepen your love for God and each other, and allow you to reflect upon the relationship between Christ and his beloved spouse, the Church.

Praying with your partner by following the structure of the Mass can be both simple and enriching. The Mass consists of four parts - gathering and introductory Rite, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, blessing and dismissal/going forth.

Gathering and Introductory Rite

We come together as a community to give thanks and to celebrate all that God has done for us in Jesus, His Son. We make the Sign of the Cross, and ask God for forgiveness, which prepares our hearts for deeper union with God.

During the week set time aside for just the two of you. Be together in a comfortable place and start by making the Sign of the Cross. Take a moment to focus on being present to each other. Then think about certain times during the week where you may have been irritable, unkind, or unhelpful towards one another.

Talk about this with your partner, then apologise and offer forgiveness. This will allow you to approach God with open hearts and to be united as you pray. Once you have forgiven one another and before moving on, offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God.



The Liturgy of the Word

This is the time when we actively listen to the readings from Scripture. This time can be likened to a conversation between Christ and the Church. Christ speaks to us in the readings, and we sing psalms to God from our hearts.

Discover God together. You could read a passage from the Bible together and talk about how the words move you or trigger an emotion or made you think. In a similar way you could read one of the Psalms together. Read it aloud, pause in silence and then talk about how the words moved you or trigger an emotion or made you think.

Another way to discover God together can simply involve talking and listening to one another about what is on your hearts and minds. What are you thankful for this week? What have the challenges been this week? What help do you need from each other and from God? Before moving on remember to offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

Jesus is made present to us through the changing of bread into the Body of Christ and wine into the precious Blood of Christ. Jesus then gives Himself to us in the Eucharist. When we receive Him in the Eucharist, we deepen our union and give ourselves back to Him.

Give yourself to your partner, deepen your union. Sharing your love in prayer may include a kiss or resting in each other's arms. It can also be caring for your partner, giving words of affirmation, or any other meaningful way you communicate your love. Before moving on, remember to offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God.



Blessing and Dismissal - going forth

The Concluding Rite asks us to go in peace, glorifying the Lord with our lives.

As your time of prayer together draws to a close, think about how you might 'go in peace' and what you might do to serve the Lord as a couple. Prayer can power you through each day and into every task! Let your service and intimacy to one another and God live on, as you go about working, cooking, cleaning, and so on.



Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a practice of Scriptural reading and reflective listening. It involves meditating on a passage of the Bible. Lectio Divina offers a chance for couples to pray together and listen to what God says to us through Scripture and to respond prayerfully to what we hear. This is a great form of prayer for couples who share the same faith, come from different Christian denominations, or if one of you has no faith.

First of all, find a quiet place or space and remind yourselves you are about to listen to the Word of God. One person should read the scripture passage aloud and when finished reading, pause and in silence recall if a word or phrase stood out or something touched your heart. If so, pause in silence again for a while and savour the feeling. Then go back and read the passage again, maybe the other person could read aloud this time. At the end of the reading, pause again and then if you feel comfortable share the word, phrase or what touched your heart with your partner. This does not need to be a conversation; it could turn into one later but for now treat it as an opportunity for you to actively listen to one another.

You could finish this time of prayer by saying an Our Father together or just say 'thank you' to your partner and enjoy a bit more time in each other's quiet company.

Daily Readings and Ideas for Prayer

Here are the daily readings for marriage week and you might like to read them together or pray with them. A short prayer has been offered for each day that can be said together or individually or you could write one of your own. The questions for reflection may lead to an interesting discussion and a chance to share your thoughts.

Friday 24 June

Readings Ezekiel 34: 11-16 and Luke 15: 3-7

Pray Lord, thank you so much for the love you have shown us. Please give us the gifts of honesty and compassion when we have hurt each other. Help us to set aside our own hurt and admit our own part in creating the distance between us and ask for forgiveness. Amen.

Reflect How do we show our love as a couple?

Saturday 25 June

Readings Lamentations 2: 2,10-14, 18-19 and Matthew 8: 5-17

Pray Lord, we/I pray that we clothe ourselves with love. If we offend one another or stir up one another to anger, let our response always be clothed in love. Let love direct our actions, for it is love that has brought us together. We/I pray against anything that attempts to break the bond of love that we have for one another. Let love be the centre of this union. Amen.

Reflect What brought us together?

Sunday 26 June

Readings 1 Kings 19: 16, 19-21, Galatians 5: 1, 13-18 and Luke 9: 51-62

Pray Lord, help us to seek out your guidance more often about the choices we/I make in life. Help us to look to our relationship for the life you promised. We pray that our focus continues to be forward looking and positive. Amen.

Reflect Who do we talk to when making a decision?

Monday 27 June

Readings Amos 2: 6-10, 13-16 and Matthew 8: 18-22

Pray Lord, we/I place this relationship in your hands because it belongs to you. We/I pray that with all humility and gentleness, with patience, we bear one another in love like You have called us to do. Let us seek to keep the peace within our union and put aside any impulsive emotions so that we can create lasting joy. Amen.

Reflect Is our love for one another patient and gentle?

Tuesday 28 June

Readings Amos 3: 1-8, 4: 11-12 and Matthew 8: 23-27

Pray Lord, may we be filled with love for each other that reflects your love for us. Your love is patient, let us be patient with each other. Your love is kind, let us be kind to each other. Your love does not envy, let us not be envious of each other. Your love does not boast, may our relationship be built on humility. Your love does not dishonour others, let us honour each other. Your love is not self-seeking, let us love each other with a selfless love. Help us to love each other well. Amen.

Reflect Could we be more patient with one another?

Wednesday 29 June

Readings Acts 12: 1-11 and Matthew 16: 13-19

Pray Lord, you call us to be a sign of your love alive in the world. Please help me to realise that our time together is precious and help me to have the courage to share my needs and to listen carefully to those of my partner.

Reflect Does our love help others?

Thursday 30 June

Readings Ezekiel 47: 1-2, 8-9, 12 and John 2: 13-22

Pray Lord, guide us to know your will. May we look to your love for us as our model of how we are to love each other. Show us how to nourish and cherish each other as we would our own bodies. Bring your strength to our weakness so that we might help each other grow into people you created us to be. Enable us to grow in our intimacy with you and with each other so that we might experience the fullness of your love.

Reflect Where do we draw strength from as a couple?

Friday 1 July

Readings Amos 8: 4-6, 9-12 and Matthew 9: 9-13

Pray Lord, thank you for our life together, for the gift of our love, and the joy of our home. We/I offer you praise and thanks for the joy you have showered into our hearts through this love we share. May we always cherish the love of each other and lead us to remain forever faithful to each other, and to you, Lord. Amen.

Reflect How can we give thanks for the life we share?

Saturday 2 July

Readings Amos 9: 11-15 and Matthew 9: 14-17

Pray Lord, help us to listen to one another. Help us to be good listeners who are sensitive to each other needs. Let us always be a helper to one another, an encouraging friend and companion to lean on. Amen.

Reflect How can we develop our listening skills?

Ideas for Couples

A relationship requires each person to be generous and to forgive, but also to accept gifts and forgiveness from the other. Pray for these blessings today.

Nurture your spiritual life, spend 15 minutes in silence together. Afterwards take turns saying something you are thankful for, sorry for, and need prayers for.

We can find many sources of security in our lives: God, family, money, jobs etc. What makes you feel most secure? Can you rely on it? Have a talk with your partner about this.

Have you gone on a date recently with your partner? It does not have to be expensive or creative, scheduling time together affirms your desire to keep the relationship strong.

Start your day together. Plan a breakfast date this week or wake up early to surprise your partner with breakfast in bed.

Plan a 'Favourites Night' around your favourite food, clothes, games, sports etc. You could take turns choosing a favourite activity which you then combine into one evening.



Ideas for Families

Have a film night with movies that celebrate marriage. UP, Julie and Julia, The Notebook, When Harry Met Sally, Shadowlands, Walk the Line, Shall We Dance, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, Father of the Bride.

Turn off your screens, put down your phones and go 'tech free' for the night. Look through old photo albums and tell each other stories of your childhood and families.

Look around your town or city and do the things a tourist might do. Visit a historic house and gardens, a museum, anything that makes your hometown special. Take your time, take some photos and enjoy what is on your doorstep.

Visit a church together outside of normal Mass times. You could explore, kneel, pray, or just sit together and let the peace wash over you.

Help for Couples and Families

Retrouvaille

Help for couples who live in the disappointment and pain of marriage problems. Call or email in confidence and without obligation.

+ 44 788 729 6983 / + 44 797 338 0443

retrouvailleukinfo@gmail.com

www.retrouvaille.org.uk

Smart Loving

Smart Loving – Breakthrough offer support to couples in stable marriages who are experiencing disconnection. Open to husbands or wives, with or without their spouse, in stressed marriages.

www.smartloving.org/breakthrough

Marriage Care

For healthy couple relationships and support when they are not. Marriage Care specialise in helping couples build and sustain strong, fulfilling, healthy relationships, and in providing support in times of relationship difficulty.

www.marriagecare.org.uk

Restored Lives

Restored Lives helps people recover fully from relationship breakdown. By supporting people through separation or divorce, when a relationship is beyond repair, they help reduce the negative effects on individuals, children, and communities. Support is also available for teenagers and young people when their parents separate.

www.restoredlives.org

Chemin Neuf

Cana has helped enrich and deepen the lives of thousands of couples, whether married or in a long-term relationship. Cana provides ongoing activities including dedicated couple weekends and open days. These are supported by guided sessions in a prayerful faith-based environment that bring couples together to share their experiences.

www.chemin-neuf.org.uk/programmes/cana/



Parish Prayer Room

Where space allows you could dedicate a room within your church building or parish hall to create a prayer space which can be accessed during Marriage Week. The room can be open for as long or as short a time as you wish to suit the life of your parish. This might be as an alternative to a service, during a day, over a weekend or throughout the whole week, it is entirely up to you.

- It might be beneficial for individuals, couples, or groups if they have the option to book slots so that each person visiting can feel comfortable to be themselves within the space.
- Consider the lighting in the prayer room: does it need to be bright and sunny or soft and meditative? This will depend on preference and perhaps the time of day. You could use candles, but make sure that someone responsible is permanently on hand or use battery operated tea-lights etc.
- Some prefer a quiet space; others prefer to have music playing in the background. You could provide music for people to enjoy.
- Arrange the prayer room with comfortable seats, and inspiring images, photos, and texts around the walls. Have bibles, prayers, poetry, and other books available that will aid people as they spend time focusing on God.
- Consider having an area in the prayer room which people can write, draw, or create in other ways as they feel inspired. This could include large pieces of paper that everyone can contribute to or smaller individual creations.



A PRAYER FOR MARRIED COUPLES

Here, O Lord we offer to you
ourselves, our souls and bodies,
our thoughts and our deeds,
our desires and our prayers,
our love for each other.

We ask you to receive us as we are,
and, of your mercy,
make us what you would have us be,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.



Parish/Community: A Social Evening for Couples

Offer an evening for couples to spend time with each other to invest in their relationship. Provide an opportunity for couples to forget about the hustle and bustle of the week and focus on each other. The evening could be held on any evening during the week but might work best on the Friday or Saturday of Marriage Week.

Members of the church or community group to provide a meal for couples attending and encourage them to engage with the theme of Marriage Week.

All couples from the community group/church and those that are connected through affiliated groups such as parent and toddler groups, youth, and children's clubs. Both married and unmarried couples who want to invest in their relationship should be invited. By inviting everyone, the church or community group has an opportunity to demonstrate the value they place on investing in others in the same way that couples are being invited to invest in their own relationship.



Wedding Feast

A wedding feast is for the whole parish to celebrate marriage. Members of the church/community group provide a celebratory 'wedding feast' for all in their community.

This feast should be inclusive of all within your community and acknowledge that marriage and family are important to everyone. Specific to churches, this wedding feast is an opportunity to celebrate that the church is the bride of Christ, and all are invited to his banquet and to reflect on the value of marriage for the entire community. Have fun together!

The meal could follow your Sunday morning service, or maybe it could be a breakfast, lunch, or early evening meal on the Saturday of Marriage Week. A mid-week early meal to coincide with a community club or activity that is already taking place within your church community or group is another option.

For all church families, local families and, those that attend church and community groups such as parent and toddler groups, youth clubs etc.

Watch Parties

A watch party is an opportunity for you to gather your parish or community online or in person, engage with the content, discuss, and pray together.

How to Host a Watch Party?

Here are two options for hosting a Watch Party using a Sycamore video – *The Meaning of Love*.

In-Person

Find a place to gather and pick a date.

Invite your parish/community and suggest they bring some food and drink to share.

Come together as a community.

Leave time for discussion and prayer.

Online

Pick a date and invite your parish/community.

Come together as a community.

Play the video on your device, share your screen with the other people on your call.

Remember to leave time for discussion and prayer.

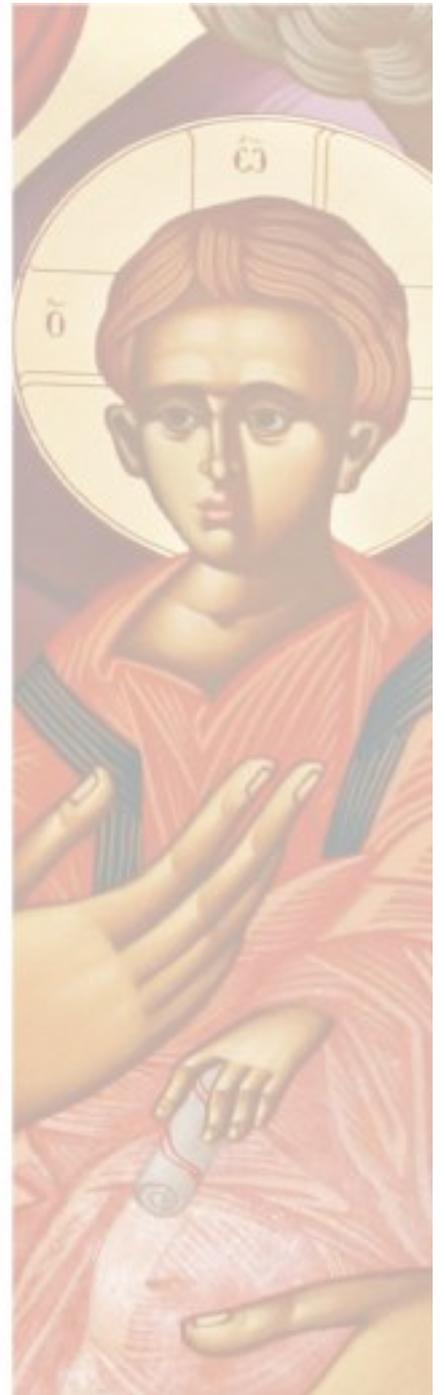
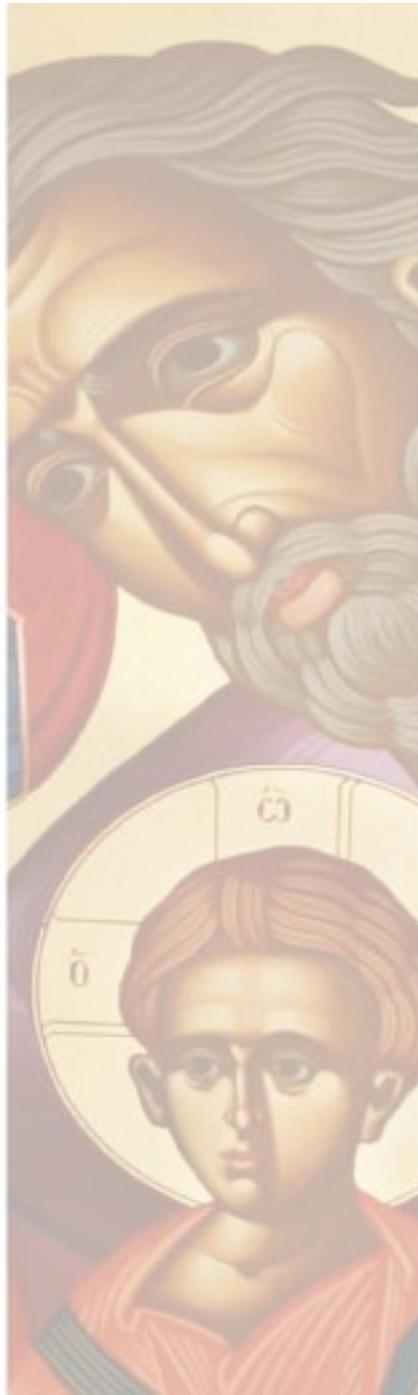
‘The Meaning of Love’:

<https://www.sycamore.fm/videos/session-10-the-meaning-of-love/>

‘Growing in Love’ by Joanne White:

<https://rcadc.org/mfl/growing-in-love/>





Icon of the Holy Family by Mihai Cucu: used by permission of the artist

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Pope Francis, General Audience, 6 November 2013

*Join Bishop Declan for Mass in the Cathedral as we celebrate the gift that is Marriage on **Saturday 2 July** at 12noon.*

All are welcome.

If you are celebrating a significant anniversary this year, newly married, or looking forward to marriage in 2022, then please contact us: adult.education@cliftondiocese.com or 0117 902 5595.

CELEBRATING

marriage

A FUTURE
FULL OF
HOPE
CLIFTON DIOCESE

MR & MRS



PRAYER FOR MARRIED COUPLES



Lord God,

*We acknowledge your greatness
and our need for your grace in our marriage.*



*Let our life together be a light of hope
for all who may be considering a life together.*



*Faith gives us courage,
for we believe that the love
that comes from you is freeing and life-giving.*

*Lord, be a partner with us in our marriage;
with your help it will be strong and enduring.*

*We rejoice that you have brought us together.
May we always be one in you.*

Amen.

Excerpt of Prayer of a Married Couple by Lauri Przybysz



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