



World Marriage Day

Second Sunday in February

Sponsored by Worldwide Marriage Encounter

FEBRUARY 10, 2008

We are aware that February 10, 2008 is the 1st Sunday of Lent and that tends to be a very busy day in parishes and dioceses. If celebrating WMD on the 2nd Sunday of February is not possible in your diocese, we suggest shifting your WMD celebration forward or back a week to February 3rd or 17th, this year. The 2008 WMD: Clergy/Family Life package will have homily suggestions for all three Sundays.

Clergy/Family Life Office Package

AN OVERVIEW

Statement of Purpose

World Marriage Day honors husband and wife as head of the family, the basic unit of society. It salutes the beauty of their faithfulness, sacrifice and joy in daily, married life.

History: The idea of celebrating marriage began in Baton Rouge, La., in 1981, when couples encouraged the mayor, the governor and the Bishop to proclaim St. Valentine's Day as "We Believe in Marriage Day". The event was so successful, the idea was presented to and adopted by Worldwide Marriage Encounter's national leadership. By 1982, 43 Governors officially proclaimed the day and celebrations spread to U.S. military bases in several foreign countries. In 1983, the name was changed to "World Marriage Day", designated to be celebrated each year on the second Sunday in February. In 1993, his Holiness, Pope John Paul II, imparted his Apostolic Blessings on World Marriage Day. WMD celebrations continue to grow and spread to more countries and faith expressions every year.

Symbol: Our World Marriage Day Symbol speaks readily of the role and values we proclaim. Husband and wife are symbolically seen as two candle-like figures, reminding us that married love calls us to help enlighten the world. The couple is joined by a heart, focusing on love as the power that fosters unity within the couple and generates the capacity to be life-giving and inspire others to fruitfulness and unity.

Theme: Our Theme for WMD has been permanently adopted as "Love One Another". This phrase is the commandment given us by Jesus in John 14. It speaks to us in a simple but challenging way of how our Father wishes us to live. Loving one another is a daily decision - simple, but challenging.

Prayer: "Father, as we prepare for WMD, we thank you for your tremendous gift of the Sacrament of Marriage. Help us to witness to its glory by a life of growing intimacy. Teach us the beauty of forgiveness so we may become more and more One in Heart, Mind and Body. Strengthen our communication and help us become living signs of your love. Make us grow more in love with the church so we may renew the Body of Christ. Make us a sign of unity in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Brother. Amen" - Fr. Bill Dilgen, S.M.M.

SAMPLE PRAYER SERVICES & LITURGIES FOR WORLD MARRIAGE DAY

THE WORLD MARRIAGE DAY MASS

While each parish or congregation may customize the fine points, many have developed a basic event that includes some of the following components:

Events:

1. A special service on WMD that has been promoted to all married couples through pulpit announcements and bulletin ads. Advertise to get all couples and families to attend this special event. Promote attendance by recognizing couples celebrating milestones in their marriages.
2. Reception-style party or picnic following the Mass/service, inviting all to attend.
3. Have married couples of the parish bring in a wedding picture the week preceding WMD and display them the weekend of WMD in celebration of Marriage.

Liturgy:

1. Homily and readings related to the sacrament of marriage.
2. General intercessions related to marriage and families.
3. Renewal of vows as part of the homily, or as a special ceremony after Mass/service.
4. A special blessing of married couples.
5. A unity candle lit and displayed during the mass.
6. Couple married longest in attendance be the presenting couple of the gifts.
7. A special couples choir to sing songs pertaining to love, marriage and family

Setting/Decorations:

1. Special floral arrangements for the church that might portray a wedding-like atmosphere.
2. Special decorations or displays in the main entrance or lobby of church.
3. Reserved seating for couples celebrating 25, 30, 40, 50, and 60 years of marriage. A procession of couples as part of the gathering rite.

A SAMPLE RENEWAL OF VOWS

(The celebrant invites the remainder of the congregation to pray in silence as married couples renew before God their sacred matrimonial commitment to each other.)

Celebrant:

"Dear Friends, on your wedding day, you stood before the Church's minister and the community, and solemnly vowed your love. On this World Marriage Day, you stand before the community of faith as a reminder of the great beauty of the Sacrament/Covenant of Matrimony."

"You stand before your children who reflect the life and love you have given to them through your marriage."

"You stand before those who are living the single vocation in the Church. Your marriage vows complement their lives of commitment and service to the Lord's call."

"You stand before widows and widowers who recall the love and commitment given to their spouse."

"You stand before us as witnesses to the married love which Christ abundantly blessed on your wedding day. I invite you now to renew the promises you made in mutual and lasting fidelity."

Couples (repeat after the celebrant):

Husbands: "I have taken you and take you again _____, to be my (wife, husband). I promise to be true to you in the good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life."

Wives: (repeat above)

Celebrant:

"You have renewed your marriage vows before the Church. May the Lord in His goodness strengthen your commitment and fill you with His blessings. Amen"

Celebrant:

Final Blessing:

"Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing."

"May God the almighty Father, give you joy. Amen"

"May the only Son of God have mercy on you and help you in good times and in bad. Amen"

"May the Holy Spirit always fill your hearts with love. Amen"

"And may almighty God bless you all, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen"

SAMPLE HOMILIES FOR WORLD MARRIAGE DAY 2008

Sample Homily for Sunday, February 3, 2008 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Zephaniah 2:3, 3: 12-13.

Second Reading: I Corinthians 1: 26-31

Gospel: Matthew 5: 1-12a.

Sample Homily by Father Doug Reed

Today we celebrate the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time and World Marriage Day. The Gospel today reminds us of the many blessings our Lord Jesus Christ has given to those who follow him. These Be-attitudes are the beginning of the discourse of Jesus which has come down to us as the "Sermon on the Mount."

Imagine Jesus sitting on a rock on a mountain side, surrounded by the crowds who came to hear him preach, and his disciples gathered around him. He looks out over the crowd and sees deep into their hearts. He knows their attitudes and their actions. He sees some who are poor in spirit, or who are mourning. He sees others who are meek or hunger for righteousness. He also sees those who are merciful, clean of heart, or peacemakers. He also recognizes those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness. He wants to comfort and encourage them. He senses their goodness and their needs. His words bring the awareness of God's blessings to his hearers.

In the crowd there are young and old men and women, single and married, and widows and widowers. Jesus knows their hunger to better sons and daughters of his Father. They have come to hear Jesus speak about God's love for them. But, they hear Jesus talking about themselves, like he knows them intimately. By sharing with them their inmost thoughts, he has revealed to them that God is their companion on their journey. He walks with them and dwells within them. He is not only their God, but their friend. Ultimately they will understand that he is also their Father.

I wonder how many couples and their families had come in search of Jesus? What was their experience in hearing his words of blessing? And how much are we like them when we come here to Church each week? How do we hunger to be better sons and daughters of the Father? How aware of his blessings upon our families and our relationships are we?

As Jesus looked out over the crowd and saw their goodness. I look out over this congregation and know your needs are similar to their needs and your blessings are similar to the blessings Jesus assured them were theirs. We gather here to meet Jesus in his Word, in his Sacraments, and in each other. We experience his love and accept his blessings. Especially today as we honor those in our congregation who have chosen to be married and live in a relationship that mirrors the love of the Trinity.

We believe that on the day of your marriage God gave to you the graces and blessings that you needed to successfully meet the situations Jesus saw in the hearts and lives of the crowd who gathered around him. You have been given the graces and blessings to change hard and difficult situations into blessed events. God has given you the graces to rise up to face trauma in your lives and to look for and find your God in the midst of turmoil. He has taught you how to forgive and how to accept forgiveness. He has shown you how to not only raise up yourselves but also others, your daughters and sons, your family members, and those whom you love or even find difficult to love.

This Wednesday we begin another season of Lent. We take the time during lent to practice the spiritual exercises which characterize our journey with one another to build the kingdom of God in our midst. The Be-attitudes are the fruit of these actions. During Lent we

are called to be a people of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We encourage our families to enter into these works of Lent, and our married couples to continue to set the example for these works to be lived in the family setting.

I suggest that we all stop for a few moments today to reflect upon the blessings God has given us. But especially let us bless those who are married among us, and ask for God's choicest blessings to be upon their families. May they become walking Be-attitudes. May those who know them, see breathing, and living Be-attitudes. May the couples who are here today or who are not able to be together find the joy of knowing God's continued embrace. God's blessings are always with you. You are blessed and you are holy in His sight. Do no wrong, and speak no lies. Live blessed lives and you will proclaim those blessings to all who will touch your lives. You are the new remnant of Israel. You are the wise ones spoken of in today's readings who live His words

Sample Homily for Sunday, February 10, 2008 First Sunday of Lent

First Reading: Genesis 2: 7-9, 3: 1-7

Second Reading: Romans 5: 12-19

Gospel: Matthew 4: 1-11

Sample Homily by Father Doug Reed

Today we celebrate the first Sunday of Lent, and the sending of our catechumens and candidates in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults program to become the "Elect" who will be received into the Church at the Easter Vigil services. We are also celebrating today World Marriage Day, a day on which we honor all the married couples in our parish family and pray for the grace of God to aid them in their Lenten journey and indeed their life journey to the Father.

The First reading from Genesis today is chosen to compliment the Gospel by reminding us that just as Adam and Eve were tempted and Jesus was tempted so too are we going to be tempted as we try to live the Father's plan for our lives. Jesus has told us that the Father's plan for us is to be united with him for all eternity. We begin that journey to the Father in Baptism and continue that journey throughout our lives. We celebrate those whose journey have led them to join the Catholic Church this coming Easter and will be joining the Bishop (or his delegate) to be enrolled among the "Elect" this afternoon. Their life experience brings them to choose our Catholic community to continue that faith journey to the Father. They have had to make many choices in life already and we pray that this decision will continue to give them the graces they need to grow deeper in love with our God and our church family.

Among the three temptations that Jesus experienced there is a parallel in the life of the people of the Old Testament and in our lives. In the first temptation Jesus is hungry and is tempted to change stones into bread. In the Old Testament the people of Israel were hungry and grumbled against God and Moses. He gave them Manna. In our own lives we discover times when we challenge whether or not God is concerned about our problems and needs. In this temptation we learn to put our trust in the providence of God.

In the second temptation Jesus is challenged to put God to a test. Israel put Moses and God to the test in the desert demanding water. Moses himself, influenced by the people's doubt, failed to trust God's word and hit the rock twice. Thus Moses was denied entering the Promised Land. We ourselves try to manipulate God into action by making deals with him. We doubt that he will act on our behalf. In this temptation we learn to believe that God will act on our behalf.

In the third temptation Jesus is tempted to worship the tempter. We remember how Israel made a Golden Calf and worshiped it. Our temptation is to make material things more important than our God. In essence, we make idols out of material things. In this temptation we learn to believe in God in a society that tries to deny him and hide him away out of sight.

We begin our journey of faith in our families. There are many different types of families in our society today, single parent families, extended families and the basic family unit where a husband and wife teach us about God, faith and worship. For most of our families the Sacrament of Matrimony begins that process of passing on the faith experience and belief in a God who loves us and cares about us. Today we honor and celebrate the sacrament that unites a man and a woman into a couple who are trying to live God's plan and pass it along to their children.

Lent is a time for couples and indeed for all of us to re-evaluate how well we live as God's people his plan and its mission. We are called during Lent to renew our lives and our mission to be God's instruments. We are called to make changes that will bring God's plan back into focus and more real. We are called during Lent to be a people of prayer, fasting, and works of charity and service to one another to accomplish these goals.

During this Lenten journey let us pray for a better communication between husbands and wives, between parents and children, between brothers and sisters, relatives, friends and especially between nations. May we be instruments of his peace and may we bring peace to a world waiting to know and love our Father.

Sample Homily for Sunday, February 17, 2008, Second Sunday of Lent

First Reading: Genesis 12:1-4a

Second Reading: Second Timothy 1:8b-10

Gospel: Matthew 17:1-9

Sample Homily by Father Bernie Steiner

On this second Sunday of Lent, we are urged to enter more fully into the spirit of Lent. In the first reading we see how Abraham was given a special call by God. God called Abraham, at age 75, to leave his homeland and move to the Land of Canaan.

During Lent we are urged to move from our comfort zone of an ordinary life to a life of deeper union with God. We are urged to grow in our baptismal commitment. We are invited to take the leap of faith and say "yes" to God's plan for us.

For the past few years World Marriage Day has been celebrated on the second Sunday of February. This Sunday is usually closest to Valentine's Day, which reminds us of the love commitments that we have in our life. This year, because the First Sunday of Lent fell on the second Sunday of February, it was suggested that World Marriage Day be observed today.

On World Marriage Day we honor and celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage, which unites a man and a woman as a couple, who then try to live according to God's plan of love and pass it on to their children. Marriage is a wonderful calling. In marriage a man and a woman help each other live according to God's will. The couple is entrusted with the special mission of teaching their children God's ways.

Those of you who are married might use this Lenten Season as a time of growing in your commitment to God and to one another. When you married you were called to leave father and mother and cling to each other. Lent is a time to leave the ordinary routine of life and work on deepening your commitment to God and to each other.

Commitment as St. Paul states in the passage from his Second Letter to Timothy, today, entails hardship. It is not easy to love unconditionally. But God promises to give special help to the married. This help is given because marriage is a Sacrament.

In the Gospel today we see our Lord's great care for us. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to bring about the salvation of the human race. He predicted that He would suffer and die. This cast a pall of sadness over His disciples. To give His Apostles hope, Jesus took Peter, James and John up the mountain to pray. On the mountain Jesus was transfigured. His divine glory was made known to the Apostles. The Apostles were thoroughly amazed. In his amazement and bewilderment Peter blurted out, "Lord, it is good that we are here." Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus about His passion. Then the Apostles heard the Heavenly Father proclaim, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him."

On the way down the mountain Jesus told the Apostles to keep the vision to themselves until He had risen from the dead. In this marvelous way Jesus gave hope to His Apostles, when they were crushed by His sufferings and death. The transfiguration gave the Apostles something to hold on to during the dark days that lay ahead. In times of trial they could always reflect back and say, "We saw Him in all his glory. He has the power. He will see us through this difficulty."

As we journey toward Easter and try to recommit ourselves to our Lord Jesus, we will have bad days. Sometimes we will wonder whether anything good is happening in our life.

Are we making any progress? So during Lent we must be like Abraham, who allowed God to guide him. Abraham did not understand what God had in mind and how He would accomplish it. Abraham simply put his faith in God's promises.

We too, must allow God to guide us. We may stumble and fall but God in His goodness will pick us up time and time again. We must try to keep in mind the image of Jesus being transfigured. Jesus has the power to transfigure and transform us.

Those of you who are married will have your special tests and trials as you try to live out your commitment to God and to each other. If you keep your hearts open to the memory of how God's faithfulness has gotten you through the rough times in the past, you will find that God is still with you, guiding you along the way.

During this time of spiritual awakening we must ask God to transfigure us into the image of Jesus. Lent leads us along a wonderful journey. Our aim is to grow in our baptismal commitment. Progress will not always be easy. But we have the transfigured Jesus to inspire us. During this holy time we listen to Him and ask Him to help us grow in our devotion to Him.

On World Marriage Sunday we pray for all married couples. May they rely on Jesus to help them love each other unconditionally. May the Holy Spirit give them the wisdom, the courage and the love to guide their children. And may the love of married couples be a sign to us of the love of Jesus, which led Him to sacrifice Himself for us.

During this holy season may we make a new beginning at leaving the comfort zone of our old lives and reach out to the surprises to which God is leading us!

SAMPLE GENERAL INTERCESSIONS (Husband and Wife to deliver)

OPTION 1

Let us join in prayer for our special anniversary couples and for all married couples on this World Marriage Day, knowing that God hears us whenever we pray.

Response: *Lord, make us one.*

Husband: That all husbands may have the wisdom and courage to help their wives grow and develop their talents, to become all God wants them to be. We pray to the Lord.

Wife: That all wives among us have the knowledge and the will to encourage their husbands to grow and fulfill all the rich potential that lies within them. We pray to the Lord.

Husband: That we may receive the gifts of patience, imagination and understanding in our relationship with our children in these changing times. We pray to the Lord.

Wife: That all couples may be delivered from the dangers of boredom and routine which can erode the deepest love relationship. We pray to the Lord.

Husband: For the courage to overcome fear and reveal ourselves more openly and honestly through more intimate communication. We pray to the Lord.

Wife: That all our relatives, friends and neighbors may experience the joy of family love. We pray to the Lord.

Husband: That all the families on earth may have the resources they need to lead happy, healthy and prayer-filled lives. We pray to the Lord.

Eternal Father, you love us so much that you gave us your only Son. Grant that all who are in the union of marriage may reflect the beauty of your love and share it with others. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SAMPLE GENERAL INTERCESSIONS (Husband and Wife to deliver)

OPTION 2

From the Book of Blessing, The Roman Ritual New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co.

Celebrant: In the tender plan of His providence, God our almighty Father has given married love, its faithfulness (and its fruitfulness), a special significance in the history of salvation. Let us therefore call upon Him saying: Lord hear our prayer.

Husband: For our Holy Father, our bishops and all priests and religious, that they may be faithful in their call to fidelity and service. Let us pray to the Lord.

Wife: For all married couples, that God give them comfort and strength in each other and joy in their children. Let us pray to the Lord.

Husband: For all those preparing for marriage, that God guide them to a deep appreciation of this Sacrament. Let us pray to the Lord.

Wife: For widows and widowers, that God may comfort them with compassion. Let us pray to the Lord.

Husband: For those who suffer the pain of a troubled marriage, separation or

divorce, that God guide them into a future filled with hope. Let us pray to the Lord.

Wife: For a greater respect for the dignity of marriage and family in our nation and society. Let us pray to the Lord.

Husband: For all our deceased family members and those of our parish who have died in faith. Let us pray to the Lord.

SAMPLE SPECIAL BLESSING OF MARRIED COUPLES

Prayer of Blessing (with hands outstretched, the celebrant concludes the intercessions by saying :

Almighty and eternal God, you have so exalted the unbreakable bond of marriage that it has become the sacramental sign of your Son's union with the Church as His spouse. Look with favor on these married couples, whom you have united in marriage, as they ask for your help and the protection of the Virgin Mary. They pray that in good times and in bad they will grow in love for each other; that they will resolve to be of one heart in the bond of peace.

Lord, in their struggles let them rejoice that you are near to help them; in their needs let them know that you are there to rescue them; in their joys let them see that you are the source and completion of every happiness. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

AMEN