

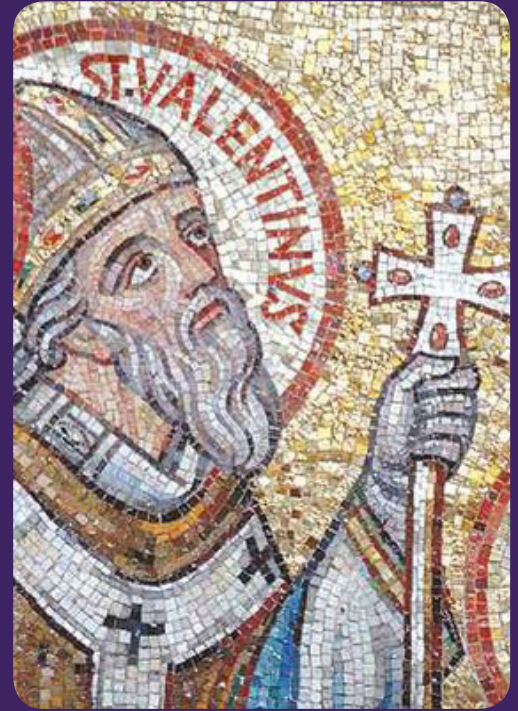
**Celebrating**

*St*

# *Valentine*

Honouring marriage and life-long romantic love

**2012**



**St Valentine's Day**

A Resource for parishes and schools from  
The Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life

## In a Nutshell

### Aim of this resource:

- To encourage families, parishes and schools to affirm the value of marriage, specifically on St Valentine's Day
- To provide practical suggestions for parishes and schools to celebrate St Valentine's Day

### This kit contains:

1. A reproducible leaflet 'The Mystery of Love' to be distributed to parishioners on or around St Valentine's Day.
2. Notes for a special St Valentine's Day liturgy (Tues Feb 14, 2012.)
3. Slides for use during the liturgy.
4. Newsletter inserts.
5. Tips for building a marriage friendly community
6. Powerpoint Slides

## How to Use this Resource

1. Reproduce the handout 'The Mystery of Love' to distribute to families at Mass or via the school the weekend before St Valentine's Day. 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 Tuesday Feb 14. Alternatively, use the notes to highlight marriage during the parish Mass on Sunday 12 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.



# St Valentine's Day

**Tuesday, February 14th, 2012**

Dear Friends,

In 2010, the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life launched the St Valentine's Day initiative. We are delighted to offer you our 2012 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.

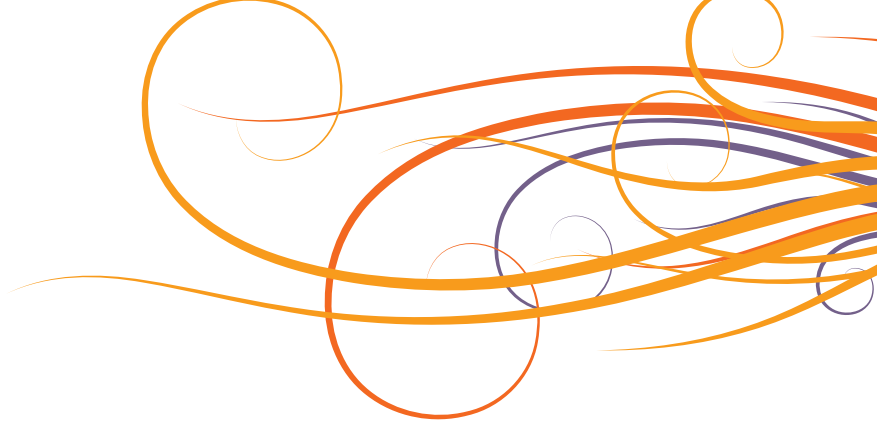
In a culture that is increasingly intolerant of Christian values and beliefs, feasts that have captured the imagination of the secular community, like St Valentine's Day, represent a unique opportunity for the Church. It is an opportunity for us to proclaim our beliefs in a way that is affirming and 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 and St Valentine.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Eugene Hurley  
Chairman, Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life

# Liturgy Outline



## Introduction

Today is the feast day of brothers St Cyril & St Methodius as well as of St Valentine. [See the Fact File, page 4]

## Opening Prayer

Father in heaven, the loving plan of your wisdom took flesh in Jesus Christ and changed history by his example of love.

May our fulfilment of his command reflect your salvation to the ends of the earth.

## Readings

### Feb 14, 2012 Sts Cyril and Methodius (St Valentine - minor feast)

#### 1: Acts 13:46-49

Paul and Barnabas speak boldly about proclaiming the gospel

#### Ps: 116:1-2

R: Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News.

#### G: Luke 10:1-9

The Lord send out 72 disciples in pairs.

## 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 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.

## Offertory

Invite 2 couples to bring forward a symbol representing a significant part of their married life. (e.g. Bed quilt, baby bottle, bible, briefcase, maintenance tools, handkerchief, map etc). As they reach the sanctuary, they (or the commentator) should explain in 2-3 sentences what the symbol is and why they chose it.

## 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.**

St Valentine's  
Day

# Liturgy Notes



## Homily Notes

### Speaking Boldly (First Reading)

Today is the feast day of brothers St Cyril & St Methodius as well as of St Valentine. All three men were early Christians dedicated to the spread of the Gospel in a hostile culture: Valentine in the Roman Empire, Cyril & Methodius in Eastern Europe in the 9th Century. Just as Paul and Barnabas ‘spoke out fearlessly,’ so too did these three men. It cost St Valentine his life.

There are some similarities to our own age; we too live in a culture that is increasingly hostile to Christian values. Most modern couples don’t think of themselves as missionaries or having much to offer in the way of evangelisation. But every Christian is called to be missionary by virtue of their Baptism and every married couple is called to love each other in a way that helps us appreciate God’s love, in other words they are called to evangelise by through their married relationship.

How might you, as married couples, bring the charisms of your sacrament to the spreading of the Gospel?

### Two by two - the power of the couple (Gospel)

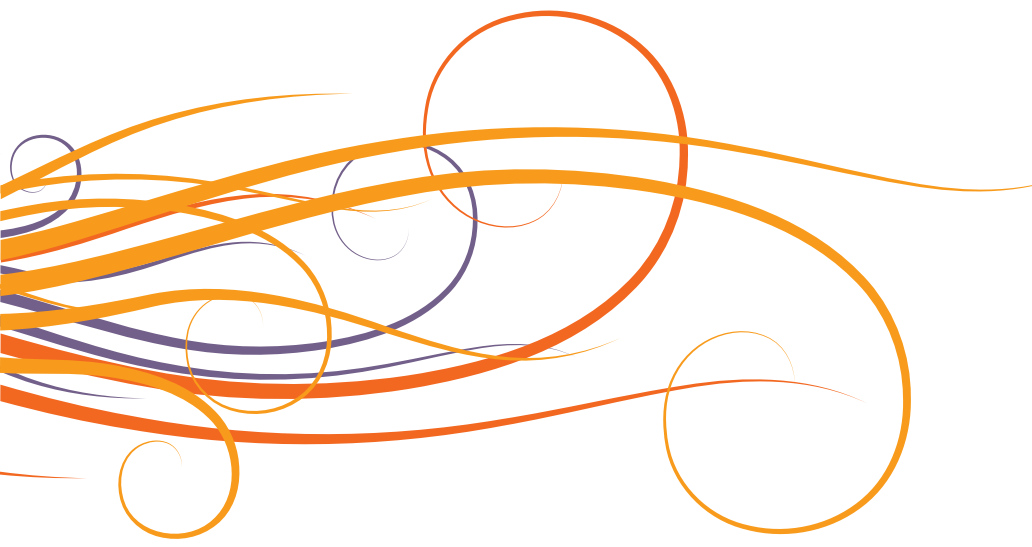
We read in Luke’s Gospel that the Lord sent his disciples out in pairs; seventy two disciples were sent two by two to the towns the Lord would visit. It reminds us of John the Baptist, preparing the way before the Lord. Similarly, the sacramental married couple ‘announces’ the coming Messiah through their love for each other. In a world where people are broken-hearted and disillusioned, faithful married couples provide a beacon of hope, illuminating the darkness of fractured relationships with a Christ-inspired example of permanent, faithful, life-long love.

The Lord gives his disciples very specific instructions:

- “Take no purse, no haversack, no sandals” – in other words, put your trust in God, rely on him for this mission. Do not depend on your financial assets or worldly resources; the Lord will provide what you need.
- “Salute no one on the road” – do not be distracted, stay focussed on the task. Do not let others dissuade or discourage you.
- “Let your first words be, ‘Peace on this house!’” – put another way, the Lord calls you to be bearers of unity, reconciliation, healing: all charisms of your marital sacrament. These are things that you do in big and little ways in your daily married lives. It is commonly called ‘working on your marriage’ but it has a profound positive effect on your children and on all with whom you come in contact
- “Stay in the same house... do not move from house to house”. The Lord calls us to drill deep, to establish solid foundations of faith rather than to scatter our efforts broadly. You do this naturally in your own families, building the faith in your children and in those who visit you.
- “Cure those who are sick” – in our age, the most pervasive sickness is the illness of the spirit. Vast numbers of people are emotionally malnourished and relationally impoverished. As married couples you are uniquely equipped to feed these hungers of the soul, welcoming the emotional orphan, the spiritually poor into your homes and heart.

Don’t forget the Powerpoint slides!





In the Catholic tradition, some of the most powerful signs of God's presence are the sacraments. The Sacrament of Marriage has a vital role in revealing the passionate love that Christ has for his bride, the Church. The steadfast love between a husband and wife witnesses to the reality that Christ loves, forgives, heals and transforms his beloved people.

**[Give an example of a couple(s) who have been a source of hope and encouragement to you. Share how the impact of their example...]**

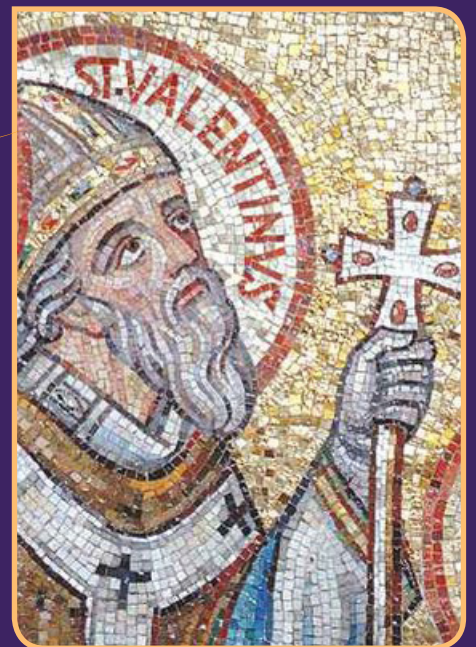
- **inspires greater generosity in you**
- **how for you, as a priest in the confessional, the way married couples forgive each other in their daily lives is a model of God's mercy for us all.**
- **how you identify your own total giving of yourself for your people in your priesthood with the total gift of self that couples make to each other in marriage.**

**Bring out how their example helps you to understand the nature of your priesthood as a spousal love for your people.]**

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.

### **Concluding thoughts**

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, unfamiliar men to serve in combat. Seeing the anguish of the young couples forbidden to marry, St Valentine allegedly 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.

# 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!

## Celebrating St Valentine's Day

A day to honour married couples.  
Join us...

Monday Feb 14th,  
Mass: xx time  
and afterwards for...

## 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.



### Catholic Society for Marriage Education

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

### Celebrate Love Seminar

[www.celebratelove.com.au](http://www.celebratelove.com.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)

### Worldwide Marriage Encounter

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

### New Families Movement of the Focolare

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

### Schönenstatt

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

### Renaissance of Marriage Conference

[www.thepmrc.org/renaissance](http://www.thepmrc.org/renaissance)

### 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)

# 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/family ministry' made up of couples to plan and execute marriage initiatives in the community.
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. (e.g. Renaissance of Marriage, MARENC)
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.livingwellmedia.com.au](http://www.livingwellmedia.com.au)).
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 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 continue the celebration.
5. Host a parish dinner for parish couples - include the married and engaged.

