

Deacon Rob Wareing's Homily from the Diocesan Celebration of Marriage and Family Life Mass

Saturday 8 February 2025

"When we reflect on the sacrament of marriage we find these virtues in its everyday living. In baptism we are graced with Faith, Hope and Charity; faith to believe the Gospel, hope that the work of grace will be fulfilled in us and charity to enable us to choose to love. When we meet someone for the first time emotionally, we begin that relationship in faith, in God and each other; as we grow together as one and in age we hope for a brighter future and the love we feel grows, blossoms and changes: yes it changes through time, but St Paul tells us that love 'never ends'.

Love for me today particularly is being married for nearly 54 years to someone who can write a homily! Not quite perhaps but Barbara is always there to cast a critically appraising eye.

These questions are asked, "Is there anything more beautiful in life than a boy and girl clasping clean hands and pure hearts on the path of marriage? Can there be anything more beautiful than young love?" And the answer comes with a resounding 'YES, there **is** a more beautiful thing: a man and a woman in older years finishing their life's journey together on that same path. With hands perhaps contorted but still clasped, faces perhaps not looking as young yet radiant, hearts bowed and tired yet still strong with love and devotion for each other."

I well recall my parents in their late eighties fitting that **latter** description; heavy with winter coats and oversized furry hats walking down Northumberland Street hand in hand heading for lunch in Fenwick's and hoping that they didn't lose each other in the crowds, which they did one day in the cafe! A blessed memory!

It is interesting that later when we come to Bishop Stephen's distribution of certificates that the anniversary gifts as the years pass, increase in value: today the most precious gift is blue sapphire as we welcome those married for 65 years. These gifts represent then symbolically the precious faith, hope and love shared with one another.

Love **is** sharing, sharing ourselves, sharing ALL of ourselves, perhaps our very fabric. Love is **being** – respectful, courteous, together, faithful.

I came across this saying a while ago: "We come to love not by finding a perfect person, but by learning to see an imperfect person perfectly." And I would add living with that imperfect person perfectly!

We know that Marriage is a vocation. Perhaps we should call it a Vacation of marriage, rather than a Vocation. We know what a holiday can be like: we don't want it to end!

With apologies to Bishop Stephen I am going to name drop now. One of Bishop Stephen's fellow Bishops, Bishop Bosco MacDonald has recently been appointed as Lead Bishop for Marriage and Family Life in England and Wales. May I read out his introduction to his Marriage Week 2025 message?

He writes:

"As we mark National Marriage Week 2025, think about the huge importance of marriage in our lives and society.

In a world that can be confusing and divided, hope shines brightly especially in this Jubilee Year. And the hope of marriage is that it becomes a source of stability and happiness, showing us the endless love that God has for all of us."

His complete message can be found on the [CBCEW website](#).

We can then in the spirit of the Pope's Jubilee, be Pilgrims of Hope in our engaged lives, our married lives and our bereaved lives.

So let us pray for the faith, the hope and the love of engaged couples, for the newly married, for those in love for countless years and the love changed by death and fractured through divorce and separation. God knows we are all human – none is perfect, but all are graced by faith and in the hope of everlasting love."