

Celebrating St Valentine's Day in the Parish

THE FAITH COMMUNITY JOINS IN PRAYING WITH AND FOR
ENGAGED COUPLES, NEWLY MARRIED AND COUPLES CELEBRATING JUBILEES

INTRODUCTION

Parishes might like to draw on these resources and suggestions for the parish on or around St Valentine's Day. They can be used within a regularly scheduled Mass or in a unique liturgy timetabled by the parish. For some parishes they may contribute to a tradition already in place around St Valentine's Day.

**IN THE CONTEXT OF ST VALENTINE'S DAY,
THESE RESOURCES CELEBRATE COMMITMENT TO LOVE**

They are offered with an eye to the World Meeting of Families in 2018. In the coming year national resources will be offered marking the different moments in the life of families. Kildare and Leighlin Faith Development Services at this time offers the following to the parishes of the Diocese as a beginning.



CONTENT

- ♥ Suggestions for preparing and celebrating the liturgy **p.2**
- ♥ A Remembrance of our Baptism; the first commitment made for us in our lives that roots our lives in the love that is the Trinity **p.3**
- ♥ A post homily blessing of commitment that includes the engaged, newly married, and those celebrating jubilees. **p. 4**
- ♥ Sample Prayer of the Faithful; including prayer for those separated and divorced, and the witness of love of those who are single **p.5**
- ♥ A Post Communion Reflection on love and commitment and a Final Blessing **p. 6**
- ♥ A template / sample Invitation Card **p. 7**
- ♥ Sample Take Home Prayer Card **p. 7**
- ♥ The story of St Valentine and the Irish Connection for parish bulletin / website **p. 8**

SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING THE LITURGY

The tone of this liturgy is very much one of celebration. To help create this tone, those preparing the liturgy might ask the following:

How will we invite people to join us for this prayer? Can we use invitation cards that can go out in the post directly to particular couples in the parish but can also be put up in our local garages, go to homes through our schools, which can be handed out on the previous Sunday...? (see sample) Can we put a notice in the local notes of the local newspaper? Can we use social media?...

How will the Church look and feel to people as they gather to celebrate the Mass/liturgy? Think warm, clean and bright. Today might be the day to make a special effort with flowers – after all it is the season for it! While roses dominant the secular market, don't forget the crocuses that are in bloom and that form part of the story of St Valentine. (see resources). Also how will we help make people feel welcome as they come into the church?

Can our hospitality extend after the liturgy? Is this an occasion when we can offer a cup of tea afterwards, possibly having material from ACCORD available for people to take home with them? A chocolate love heart offered to all as they leave the church might be very welcomed by people.

How can we use music in this liturgy to help convey a sense of festivity? How will our music ministers help support and enhance our prayer and actions throughout the celebration? Musical choices might include, God is Love; Faith, Hope and Love; Love is the Boat for the Journey; Prayer of St Francis; Oh the Love of my Lord is the essence.

The Introductory Rite: Will we invite a parishioner to give an introduction? The purpose of the introduction is to let people know the special emphasis of the celebration and to give a particular welcome to engaged couples, the newly or recently married and those celebrating jubilees this year.

Remembrance of Baptism / Sprinkling Rite: The sprinkling rite is a reminder of our baptism, for most of us the first public commitment made in our lives. On this day when we celebrate the commitment of the couples in our midst, having a sprinkling rite can remind us of our own baptism and the grace it has given us to live Christian lives. It is this grace, this presence within us of God who is love, that gives us the strength we need to live out what we have committed to in our lives, our chosen vocation. How will this sprinkling rite be done? What music will help support it?

Homily: What words of nourishment and faith do you think people preparing for or in the midst of married life need to hear at this time?

Blessing of Commitment: There are a number of ways of choreographing this prayer. One way might be to invite to the sanctuary area, group by group, the engaged couples, newly married and the jubilarians. They can be invited to stand facing the people. Another way might be to invite the different groupings of couples in turn to simply stand in their places. Your choice will likely

depend on the numbers involved and the nature of your liturgical space. If people are coming to the sanctuary area suitable instrumental music might be played as people assemble. How will you involve the rest of the assembly in the action of the prayer which, after all, is being prayed in the name of the gathered community? This might involve the priest inviting the congregation to extend their hands in blessing towards those in the sanctuary area or towards a couple in close proximity to them. At the end of the blessing, invite everyone to stand and a) join in a hymn, for example “Oh the Love of my Lord is the essence” followed by the Prayer of the Faithful or b) move straight into the Prayer of the Faithful.

Prayer of the Faithful: Who will lead these prayers? An engaged couple might be invited to do so. Some prayers are offered in this resource. After these prayers all are seated – if couples are in the sanctuary area they now return to their places.

Preparation of the altar and presentation of gifts: In keeping with the festivity of today’s celebration, a couple from each of the three groups could be invited to dress the altar, i.e. with a large white cloth, corporal and a basket of flowers at the foot of the altar, and to present the gifts of bread and wine. A suitable hymn for the day’s celebration could be sung.

Communion Reflection: A jubilee couple or other could be invited to share a communion reflection. One is offered in this resource.

Dismissal: Before the final dismissal, an open invitation might be given to share in a cup of tea after the liturgy / Mass. As people leave the church (with perhaps a chocolate!) or to have their cuppa, they might also be given a prayer card. A Final Blessing for the congregation is offered in this resource.

REMEMBRANCE OF BAPTISM

After the greeting, the Priest stands before a vessel containing blessed water. He addresses those present and invites them to recall their baptism, using these or similar words:

Brothers and sisters,
We gather on this day to worship God and to give thanks for the great witness to
God’s love that the commitment of married life gives to us and to the world.
As we welcome this blessed water that will be sprinkled on us
let us recall our own baptism
 when we were baptised in the name of the Trinity,
 reminding us that our God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a holy union of love.
As children of God, may we today once more welcome the abundant love
that God pours into our hearts,
a love to have and to share as we make our journey in life.

1. **Taking the aspergillum, the Priest sprinkles himself and the ministers, and then the people, moving through the church. Meanwhile, an appropriate hymn is sung.**
2. **When he returns to his chair and the singing is over, the Priest stands facing the people and, with hands joined, says:** May almighty God cleanse us of our sins, and through the celebration of this Eucharist make us worthy to share at the table of his Kingdom. **R. Amen. The Mass continues with the Gloria.**

♥ POST HOMILY BLESSING OF COMMITMENT

Introduced in these or similar words:

Priest/ member of parish: We know that all of us need God's blessing at all times. On this day, when we are giving thanks for the commitment of married love, we will ask God now to bless in a particular way those among us who are engaged to be married, those among us who are newly married and those among us who this year celebrate jubilees of their marriage.

I invite them to come forward now to the sanctuary area (*or to stand*) and receive our prayer for them and God's blessing. (*Instrumental music might accompany those coming forward and settling into their places*)

Priest: to the congregation...As I make this prayer in the name of this community I invite you, the congregation, to join me in extending your hands towards these couples.

And so we pray:

God who created us in love and for love,
from earliest times your people called you 'rock' and 'stronghold' and 'mighty fortress',
as they learned to appreciate your absolute loyalty and dependability;
in Jesus' heart of love you have given the world
the enduring statement that you are everlasting, faithful love.

In all the power of who you are,
bless each one here on their journey of commitment.

Bless those who are preparing to celebrate their marriage,
that as they await the day of their wedding
they will grow in mutual respect and in their love for one another,
that through their companionship and prayer together
they will be truly ready to enter into the bond of love that is marriage.

Bless those who are newly married
that in these early days of their life together
they will possess the gifts that will enhance their married life,
the gift of listening, the gift of putting the other first,
the gift of self-knowledge, the gift of reliability and faithfulness.

Bless those who in this year are celebrating a jubilee of marriage,
that, while giving thanks to God for the wonderful gift of these many years together,
they will continue to be ever renewed in their marriage
in good times and in bad, finding strength and joy in their faithful love for one another
and God's love for them,
and so bear even greater witness to each of us here to the true nature of love.

May the God of love and peace abide in you, guide your steps, and strengthen your hearts in his love,
now and forever. And may God bless you+ in the name of the...

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Some of the following might be included in today's Prayer of the Faithful. A suitable prayer response today might be the sung or recited: O Lord, hear us we pray. R. O Lord, give us your love.

We pray for our Church leaders and all who actively support marriage in our faith community. We pray for God's continued blessing on ACCORD and the many lay movements who work with couples and families to help enrich their life together.

O Lord, hear us we pray. R. O Lord, give us your love.

We remember and pray for all couples who are preparing for marriage at this time. As they look forward to this happy day, may they create a space for God in their relationship, trusting in God's power to make them strong and fulfilled in their commitment to one another.

O Lord, hear us we pray. R. O Lord, give us your love.

We pray for all married couples, that in whatever part of life's journey they find themselves, they may have God's loving presence at the centre of their union, to support them all their days in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, until the evening of life comes.

O Lord, hear us we pray. R. O Lord, give us your love.

We pray for those who have known the disappointment and hurt of marriage breakdown. May they be touched by the love of God who walks each step with them and who desires a full and happy life for them.

O Lord, hear us we pray. R. O Lord, give us your love.

We pray for those who are single. That they may appreciate the witness to God's love that they can and do give in the Church and in the world as they live out the commitment of their baptism.

O Lord, hear us we pray. R. O Lord, give us your love.

We pray for those who have experienced the death of their husband or wife. In the midst of their sorrow may they also have the consolation and joy of cherished memories of married life with all its struggles and challenges and achievements together, of a married love that ultimately endured all things and bore all things.

O Lord, hear us we pray. R. O Lord, give us your love.

We pray for (N. and for) all who have died and who now have a place in heaven at the wedding feast of the Lamb.

O Lord, hear us we pray. R. O Lord, give us your love.

♥ A POST COMMUNION REFLECTION

Pope Francis, in the letter he wrote after the Synod on the Family, reminds us that the grace of the sacrament of marriage is intended before all else to perfect the couple's love. Love is at the heart of marriage.

Using scripture, he goes on to tell us that 'even if I have faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.'

And very helpfully, Pope Francis actually places before us a very practical vision of love in action, again using a scripture quote from St Paul.

As we prepare to leave our celebration let us take a moment to listen closely to the words of St Paul, perhaps bringing these words to how we practice love in our closest relationships.

'Love is patient, love is kind; *(pause)*

Love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. *(pause)*

Love does not insist on its own way, it is not irritable or resentful; *(pause)*

It does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. *(pause)*

Love bears all things, *(pause)* believes all things, *(pause)* hopes all things, *(pause)* endures all things.'
(pause)

♥ FINAL BLESSING

Please bow your heads for God's blessing:

May the God of love fill you with every joy that comes with believing. AMEN.

May the peace of Christ live in your hearts. AMEN

May the Holy Spirit enrich you with gifts for achieving full and faithful lives.

And may almighty God bless you....

We
Love
because
HE first
Loved
Us

♥ A TEMPLATE OF AN INVITATION CARD To be adapted to suit local decisions...

ST VALENTINE'S DAY CELEBRATION



A WARM INVITATION TO
ENGAGED COUPLES, THOSE MARRIED IN THE PAST YEAR



THOSE CELEBRATING A JUBILEE OF MARRIAGE THIS YEAR

The parish community invites you to join them for a special liturgy to celebrate and pray for you at this particular time in your life journey.



(where)

(Date)

(Time)

Followed by a cup of tea afterwards.

You are very welcome to bring family along with you for this happy occasion.

RSVP to the parish office, (ph number)

♥ TAKE HOME PRAYER CARD – A TEMPLATE The following can be copied and pasted directly onto a word document and photocopied on heavier card paper as needed...

LOVE

*is patient, love is kind;
is not jealous or boastful;
is not arrogant or rude.
does not insist on its own way,
is not irritable or resentful;
does not rejoice at wrong, but
rejoices in the right.
bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.'*
(1 Corinthians 13:4-7)



Loving God, help me to be guided by these words of faith. Give me the grace to live them every day so that I may know and share true love in my life. Amen.

♥ ‘...From your Valentine’: The story of St Valentine

In ancient Rome the festival of Lupercalia began on February 15, the day supposedly when in early Spring the birds started mating. On the eve of the festival, young girls wrote love messages and placed them in a large urn. The young men of Rome each drew out a message from the urn and would court the girl whose name they had picked for the duration of the festival. This courtship often continued and ended up in marriage. However, in the early third century, the Roman Empire was experiencing a shortage of much needed soldiers for its many military campaigns. Thinking that marriage was stopping men from entering the army, the Roman Emperor at the time, Claudius II, cancelled all engagements and weddings! In defiance, Valentine, a priest of Rome, secretly married young couples until his eventual arrest and imprisonment.

While in prison, Valentine prayed for the blind daughter of one of his jailers. Before his execution for the faith on February 14, 269, Valentine wrote a farewell message to the girl, urging her to stay close to God and signing it “from your Valentine”. It is said that when the little girl opened up the message that a yellow crocus fell out; looking down on the flower, the girl saw colour for the first time. She had been cured.

The original Roman festival was Christianised by Pope Gelasius in 498 AD when he named February 14 as St Valentine’s Day. The crocus, which flowers about this time of the year, is also known as St Valentine’s flower.

The Irish bit of the story... In 1835 Fr John Spratt, a Carmelite priest in Dublin, who had been responsible for the building of the new church to Our Lady of Mount Carmel at Whitefriar Street, visited Rome. He had quite a reputation as a preacher and was invited to preach at the famous church, the Gesu. The elite of Rome flocked to hear him and he received many tokens of esteem from prominent members of the Church. Pope Gregory gifted him the remains of St Valentine.

The reliquary containing the remains were received by the archbishop of Dublin, Dr Murray, on November 10th 1836 with a solemn procession to Whitefriar Street, followed by a Solemn High Mass. After the death of Fr Spratt, devotion to the relics declined and they were left to collect dust in a back room until the renovation of the church in the 1950/60’s. Then they were returned to prominence with an altar and shrine being constructed to house them and enable them to be venerated. The statue of St Valentine was carved by Irene Broe and depicts the saint in the red vestments of a martyr and, appropriately, holding a crocus in his hand.

