
LETTER TO COUPLES



On this St. Valentine's Day I want to address a few words to all loving couples in our midst. I am certain that there are many. Each year, in the sacrament of matrimony the Edmundston Diocese Church celebrates the love of some two hundred couples. This is an important event not only for the couples themselves but also for the Christian community as a whole and the diocese itself. What vitality there is in the Church! What a promise for tomorrow! What a mission of love!

LOVE IS OF GOD

As shepherd of the diocese, I find it a most happy experience to greet couple in love. they too are living proof that the love of God is from age to age. Seeing their serenity and vitality, listening to their life project, and being witness to the seriousness of their undertaking and plans, one better understands that all love comes from God. There is in these couples a force arousing them to give themselves to one another, to raise up life and happiness around them, and even to forgive one another. Let us listen to these words of St. John from his first Letter: "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God... if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us... those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them... There is no fear in love, because love casts out fear." God is the origin of all love; He is its source and its achievement.

DIGNITY OF MARRIAGE

Despite the difficulties caused by our society's profound transformations, marriage is still filled with dignity. In sharing with young lovers who have been through a marriage preparation programme, I realise that marriage is an important value, for them. There is a profound respect for this community of love and life; these couples would like to live this community of love and life throughout their lives; they are grateful to those who have helped them discover their mission, who help them prepare, and who support them throughout their married life. This friendly presence is a great reassurance to them, and it inspires them to believe in the constancy of their love. They will not be alone in making their commitments, on their wedding day; not only will their friends be there, but also the Christian community as a whole. Some of these lovers inquired whether there existed any follow-up programme after marriage, a programme that would be similar to the marriage preparation one. I told them there was. [Besides specific programmes], I was also thinking of couple-friends who help one another on a daily basis, through the highs and lows of married life. It is something priceless for a couple to know about and be able to count on understanding friends who support the couple in their commitment.

THE WEDDING GUEST

In a book titled *L'invité aux noces*, my friend Father Lucien Robitaille of Québec presents a teaching based on the marriage liturgy scripture texts. He states that Christ's love can take shape in every human activity and every social condition. But from all of life's different situations, community of life and love which we call marriage is the greatest human situation in which God's love seeks to develop, so much so that spouses who are disciples of Christ receive the special mission of being witnesses of Christ's love: the profound, tender and faithful love of a couple is a sign of the depth, tenderness, and fidelity of Christ Jesus.

AN IMPORTANT MISSION

Father Robitaille writes: "Whenever two Christians decide to live their marriage according to the spirit of Jesus, when then accept to place their married love and its concomitant projects in his hands, Christ responds by assuring them of his abiding presence. He approves their commitment and enables them to share in his Spirit. He encases their human alliance within his own covenant of love with the world. He enables them to be the interpreters of his tenderness to one another, and together, to the world. Their marriage becomes an image of and a sharing in the covenant of love uniting Christ and his Church."

A MISSION OF LOVE

Sister Madeleine Dubé, O.P., composed a beautiful song for World Mission Day, but the words can also shed light on the path followed by lovers preparing to celebrate the sacrament of matrimony. See for yourself: "We want to live your mission of love, Lord Jesus. We want to live your mission of love, together in the same Spirit. Jesus, Word of Life, you sowed the truth: teach us to live out your message every day. Light of humankind, light up our night and turn us into flames of love! Jesus, source of life, you have gratified the little ones; teach us to live in hope, each day. Living water for humankind, quench our thirst and make us wellsprings of love! Jesus, bread of life, you fed the hungry: teach us to live each day in a spirit of sharing. Tenderness for humankind, arouse our faith, make of us signs of love! Jesus, promise of life, you loved to the very end; teach us to live every day of your mystery. Offering for humankind, transform our hearts, make us temples of love!"

Couples in love, my wish to you is that you be, throughout your days, flames of love, wellsprings of love, signs of love, and temples of love. In this way you will continue to be terrific!

Happy Valentine! Have a good week!

+ François Thibodeau

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