
A CELEBRATION OF OUR LOVE



A marriage preparation resource [in French] titled *Une fête pour notre amour* ["A Celebration of Our Love"], is distributed to engaged couples when they attend their marriage preparation session. The engaged are urged to carefully plan their marriage celebration so that it be more meaningful to them and their guests. The quality time the couple spend preparing the event helps them better realise the full import of their love and their commitment.

TO THE DIGNITY OF SACRAMENT

In renewing all things, Christ Jesus willed that marriage recover its original meaning and holiness, so that humankind no longer separate what God has joined. For this unbreakable marriage commitment to reflect more easily his own union with the Church, Christ has raised it to the dignity of sacrament, that is, he has made it a sign of his presence in our world. In times past, his presence brought blessing and happiness to the wedding feast at Cana, where he changed water into wine; by his presence today, he continues to bring blessing and joy to the men and women who undertake this journey of love. And just as he was able to change water into wine, so can he transform our human love into divine love. At the heart of the lives of lovers the very love of Jesus can be perceived and recognised.

WHERE IS LOVE?

An old Latin hymn used to remind us of a surprising reality: *Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est*. "Where there is charity and love, there is God." Fortunately, we can still proclaim this wonder in song, we can still sing it to new tunes. The meaning is that if there is love somewhere, God is there. Not only is God Love, but wherever there is love, the presence of God is revealed. How I wish we were all "God detectors," revealers of God!.. If only we could recognise the presence of God in every loving word and gesture: this is true of young lovers, of engaged couples, and of parents who love one another: *Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est*. May we all, according to the grace received, reveal the loving God who made us, to whom we belong and in whose image and likeness we are.

TOUCHING GOD!

There are times in life when it seems that we can touch God, the sense of His presence is so strong, so strong also is our feeling of His indwelling in us. Circumstances differ according to people: for some, it is in nature that the face of God is seen. For others, it will be at the time of some religious experience. For still others, it is through contacts with others who help them discover the presence of the Lord. And when these contacts are "sacramental," there can be no doubt: God is there in love which is shared. The love of man and woman reflects God's love for humankind.

THE GREAT LOVE

In the wedding liturgy there are many songs with Gospel themes: *"The great love,"* says Jesus, *"is to give oneself, to give oneself for those we love. Do not love in word but in deed, because love without giving soon dies. Forgive one another sincerely, as God the Father has forgiven you."* Then there are the songs of Murielle Duguay: *"Yes, I want to say to all those who love that to love one must suffer and then die, but to love is beautiful, to love is a great thing, it is a foolish thing, to love. Do not be afraid to love, it is so beautiful to love, to love is a great thing."* *"In life, when we love, when we truly love, we cannot help but be happy; we resemble our God."*

PROCLAIM TO THE WORLD

Priest-poet Jean-Marc Biron wrote a beautiful poem set to music by Fr. Armand Chouinard: *"I want to cry out to the world around, I want to sing of the love that is in us, since this love is from you. Powerful as the gusty wind, as the stormy wind, see how great it is. As a clear stream of water, see how fragile it is, like a bubbling brook, see how beautiful it is! Like a wild flower, see how alive it is, and like the spring, see how full of promise it is. What a marvel! See how God is present. How delightful, this presence of God! It is deep life, it grows in us, it is life of the world, through it God becomes man."*

DIVINE TENDERNESS

If Christian spouses can claim to make visible to God's love for us, it is because God's love is in them first, that they are extensions of Jesus. He himself spoke about the Spirit in him, to his disciples, *"The love of God has been poured out in our hearts."* Jesus explained this wonderful reality: between him and the Father there is such a powerful and total love flowing that it is a person. This love-in-person, the Holy Spirit, Jesus will call up in the hearts of his disciples so that they live and love as he himself has. Dear lovers, dear engaged couples, do not be afraid! Open wide the door to our God! Do not be afraid! He alone knows the human heart. He has made us for Himself and our hearts are restless until they rest in Him!

PRAYER

A prayer for all lovers: *"Grant us, O Lord of all creation, a peaceful life and many days, mutual love united in peace, descendants with the gift of a long life, and affection for our children. May we live to see our children's children grow to maturity. Protect our union, may heavenly graces rain down on us, and give us in abundance so that we may come to the help of the needy, O God of mercy and love, you who are so full of love for all humankind."*

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