



Married Life is beautiful and must be protected

By **Janette Davidson**, Parish Support Unit

“The plan inherent in marriage is truly wonderful! It is expressed in the simplicity, and also in the fragility, of the human condition. We are all aware of the many difficulties and trials there may be in the life of a married couple. And the secret is that love is stronger than the moments in which we argue, and I therefore always advise married couples never to let the day draw to an end without making peace.... Married life is beautiful and must be protected.” (Pope Francis, Catechesis on the Sacrament of Marriage, 2 April 2014)

The vocation to which every Christian person is called is the call to love. The call to love is ultimately what God asks from each of us. One way we can choose to live out our call to love is through the vocation of marriage. Others may live out their vocational call through priesthood, diaconate, religious life and single life.

Marriage is filled with many joyful moments which we cherish but there can also be many painful moments. A number of Diocesan couples are happy to share their insights on what is special or important about marriage and parenthood. Some may resonate with your own experience:

“The vocation of marriage is learning how to love, the act of becoming other-centred rather than self-centred is what marriage is about. The sooner we learn this in marriage the happier we will be. If we don’t learn it in our relationship with our spouse then God gives us a fool proof way to learn it – children.”

“My marriage has been the single greatest influence in my life. Besides truly loving ‘being in love’, I have learned how to love and serve people in my life. Truly, my wife has been my greatest asset. I would not be the person I am today without her love and influence.”

“The longer I’m married, the more I see the joy, adventure and challenge of living marriage. It’s a living relationship in which you become one and develop as distinct persons. Having and bringing up children together is wonderful and fruitfulness is a great blessing.”

“The best gift we can give our children is the example of a loving relationship. Our commitment to each other has made our life so much richer and fun. Marriage is a continuous journey of loving, forgiving, laughing and crying together. People put a lot of effort into their wedding day but it’s continuing the daily relationship of love and communication that makes a marriage. What a gift it is to be married to my best friend.”

Day by day couples build a strong marriage by receiving and giving and by acting upon invitations to grow together. There are many opportunities available to enrich married life; some are always there, some are there especially in times of need.

Ways to nurture and sustain your marriage include:

- ♦ Finding time, making time, creating time to be with each other and to talk about how you feel and what you feel towards each other;
- ♦ Involvement as a couple in parish ministries;
- ♦ Taking time out to enrich your marriage by participating in programs which can help deepen your understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of your marriage such as weekends, seminars and workshops offered by Worldwide Marriage Encounter, SmartLoving and Couples for Christ. Information on these opportunities can be found on the organisations’ websites, in parish bulletins, the Diocesan website and by contacting Janette Davidson on 0409074908 or at janette.davidson@dbb.org.au

- ♦ Reading and discussing articles on marriage in the *Broken Bay News* and other Christian journals;
- ♦ Accessing suitable websites such as “For your marriage” www.foryourmarriage.org
- ♦ Using counselling and other support services (see CatholicCare Diocese of Broken Bay www.catholiccaredbb.org.au for details).

There are also opportunities throughout the year when parishes and schools celebrate marriage and parenthood including St Valentine’s Day, Families Week, National Marriage Day and Marriage Week.

Pope Francis has focused the attention of the Catholic Community around the world on the vocation of marriage and family life in the calling of Family Synods scheduled for 2014 and 2015.

Feedback from the Family Synod Survey has indicated that there is a need to raise awareness of the vocational nature of marriage and parenthood and the specific spirituality of the home (domestic church) which is integrated into the daily living out of family life in response to the Gospel.

Fr Daniel O’Leary describes human love as God’s love in disguise. God, he says is worshipped in the most ordinary and extraordinary moments of married life, and all such moments are full of grace; but too often we fail to recognise God’s presence in each other. Friendship, love and marriage are sacred because they call out our deepest and most authentic humanity – a humanity that is made in God’s image.