

## World Marriage Day – February 24, 2018

My brothers and sisters in the Lord, what a great joy it is to be with you today and to celebrate your wonderful anniversaries! You have been living out the sacrament of holy matrimony in your marriages so faithfully and so well! I recognize the sanctity of your calling, and I know that your sacrament is a way to holiness for you. This is something that is inspiring to me, but also something inspiring to the world. Faithfulness and the willingness to live out a life-long calling is a great witness in the midst of our times.

Of course, we know that your calling to love and faithfulness is not always easy! Just as priesthood stands at the foot of the cross of Jesus, so does marriage. Just as the consecrated life is a witness of the gospel to the world, so is marriage. The love you bear *for* one another, and *with* one another, is a sign of the Kingdom of God present in our times. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has spoken about the value of the witness of marriage as a life-long commitment in the midst of what he has called a “throw away” culture. We cannot treat other human beings the way we treat mere objects. We must treasure one another and stand by each other.

“Marriage is an act of faith between a man and woman who are both fragile and limited, but courageous enough to follow Christ and seek to love each other as he loves them,” the pope said Wednesday, during his general audience in St. Peter's Square. (May 6, 2015)

To love each other as Christ loves you! Wow! What a great calling! And it means learning to treasure each other with tenderness, humility, and the willingness to endure.

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Our readings today are of the season of Lent, where we are reminded of the call to be faithful to the covenant God has given to us. The love that Jesus calls us to as disciples and missionaries is a love that sacrifices, that goes the extra mile. We know that marriage is not always easy. Sometimes its never easy!

“Living together as a couple is “an art, a patient, beautiful and fascinating journey . . . which can be summarized in three words: please, thank you and sorry.” Pope Francis  
(Meeting with Engaged Couples at the Vatican, St. Valentine’s Day 2014)

An Italian psychiatrist noted that the Pope’s insight into marriage was remarkable for a man who had never been married! Yet, he hit the nail on the head when he brought up those three simple words that make a marriage a success! “Please.” “Thank you.” And, “I’m sorry!” Truly, the life of the whole world would be changed if we all learned to say those words everyday!

At that same meeting with Engaged Couples in 2014, the Pope cut to the essence of how we must conduct ourselves in marriage and family life. He said,

“True love does not impose itself with hardness and aggression. . . . St. Francis said that ‘courtesy is the sister of charity.’ . . . Today, in our families, in our world . . . there is a need for far more courtesy.”

As we celebrate your wonderful anniversaries today, let us do so with courtesy toward one another, and with hearts renewed in the virtue of Hope.