

26. The Beauty of Lifelong Commitment

Ruth 1,16-17; Mt 19,6

THEME: “Love that Stays: The Beauty of Lifelong Commitment.”

INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, an elderly journalist interviewed a couple who had been married for more than sixty years. He asked the wife, “What kept your marriage together for so long?”

She smiled gently and replied, “We were born in a time when broken things were repaired, not thrown away.”

Her answer was simple, but it carried the wisdom of a lifetime. Love survives not because life becomes easy, but because two people decide, again and again, not to walk away from each other.

Today’s readings speak about that kind of love. Ruth tells Naomi, “Wherever you go, I will go,” and Jesus reminds us in the Gospel: “What God has joined together, let no one separate.” Marriage is not merely a promise spoken on a beautiful day; it is a covenant lived through ordinary days, difficult days, joyful days, and uncertain days.

As we gather to celebrate this sacred union, we also acknowledge that faithful love requires grace, patience, forgiveness, and sacrifice. Therefore, let us humble ourselves before the Lord and ask pardon for the times we have failed in love, perseverance, and fidelity.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you teach us that true love remains faithful in every season of life: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, you never abandon your people but remain with us in joy and sorrow: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you call husbands and wives to reflect your enduring and faithful love: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God, who is rich in mercy and steadfast in love, forgive us our sins, strengthen us in fidelity and compassion, heal every weakness in our hearts, and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

COLLECT

O God,
who reveal the beauty of faithful love
through the covenant of marriage,
look kindly upon your servants N. and N.,
who today pledge themselves to one another for life.
Grant that, strengthened by your grace,
they may remain steadfast in love,
constant in sacrifice, patient in trials, and joyful in hope.
May their home become a witness
to the enduring love with which Christ loves his Church.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

HOMILY

A man once visited a nursing home and noticed an elderly husband feeding his wife with extraordinary tenderness. Her hands trembled, her memory had faded, and she no longer recognized many people around her.

Afterward, someone asked him, “Why do you still come every day when she no longer even knows who you are?”

The old man quietly replied, “She may not know who I am, but I still know who she is.”

That is love at its deepest.

Not love that lasts only while feelings are strong, but love that remains when life becomes difficult.

Not love built merely on emotions, but love built on decision, covenant, and faithfulness.

This is the kind of love we encounter in today’s readings.

In the First Reading, Ruth speaks words that have echoed through centuries:

“Wherever you go, I will go... your people shall be my people.”

Ruth was not speaking during a moment of comfort. Naomi had lost her husband and sons. Their future looked uncertain. Ruth could have chosen an easier path. Instead, she chose loyalty. She chose to stay.

Real love is revealed not when staying is easy, but when leaving would be easier.

In every marriage, there will be beautiful days: celebrations, laughter, success, children, anniversaries, dreams fulfilled. But there will also be moments of misunderstanding, disappointment, sickness, financial burdens, exhaustion, and silence. The strength of marriage

is not that difficulties never come; the strength of marriage is that two people continue walking together through them.

There is an old story about a bridge in a small village. Every year storms would damage it, and every year the villagers repaired it. A traveller once asked, “Why do you keep rebuilding it?”

The villagers answered, “Because too many lives depend on this bridge.”

Marriage is like that bridge. It must sometimes be repaired with forgiveness, rebuilt with patience, strengthened with prayer, and protected with sacrifice. Too many lives depend on it — the lives of the spouses, the children they may one day receive, and all those who will learn love by watching them.

Jesus says in today’s Gospel:

“What God has joined together, let no one separate.”

These words are not a burden; they are a promise. Christ himself becomes the foundation of this union. Human love alone can grow tired. But when God is at the centre, love receives strength greater than human weakness.

A married couple celebrating their fiftieth anniversary was once asked the secret of their long marriage. The husband answered humorously, “Many times we wanted to give up — on the same day. But thankfully, one of us always decided to stay.”

That is the hidden heroism of married life: choosing each other repeatedly.

N. and N., today you are not promising perfection. You are promising presence. You are saying: “I will stand beside you when life is bright and when life grows dark. I will not love you only for who you are today, but also for who you are still becoming.”

And that is exactly how God loves us.

At the end of life, people rarely remember expensive gifts, luxurious houses, or worldly success. They remember who stayed. Who remained faithful. Who held their hand in suffering. Who chose love even when it was difficult.

A little child once watched his grandparents walking slowly together. The grandfather could barely walk, and the grandmother supported him with every step. The child asked, "Why does grandma walk so slowly now?"

His mother answered, "Because love walks at the speed of the one who needs it most."

That is the beauty of lifelong commitment.

Today, before God and the Church, N. and N. begin that sacred journey. May their love never become merely a feeling, but always remain a faithful decision. And may their marriage become a living reminder that true love does not merely endure time — it becomes beautiful because it endures. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered around Christ, who strengthens every covenant of love, let us present our prayers to God the Father for this couple and for the needs of the whole world.

1. For N. and N., that their marriage may grow stronger through every season of life, and that they may remain faithful to one another in joy and in trial, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

2. For all married couples, especially those experiencing difficulties, that God may renew in them patience, forgiveness, and enduring love, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

3. For families throughout the world, that homes may become places of peace, prayer, understanding, and compassion, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

4. For those who feel abandoned, lonely, widowed, or burdened by suffering, that they may find comfort in God's faithful presence, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For all of us gathered here, that we may learn to love not only in words but through faithful actions and sacrifice, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father,
you never abandon those whom you love.
Hear the prayers we place before you today,
and strengthen all families with the grace of enduring fidelity.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters,
that this sacrifice, offered with grateful hearts
for the gift of faithful love,
may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in your wisdom and love
you created man and woman
to become one heart and one life in marriage.

You teach us through the covenant of love
that faithfulness is stronger than hardship
and that enduring love reflects your own unfailing mercy.

In Christ your Son,
you remain with those who trust in you,
strengthening husbands and wives
to persevere in patience, forgiveness, sacrifice, and joy.
Through the grace of this sacrament,
you make family life a sign of your presence in the world.

And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray with confidence to the Father
who strengthens every home with faithful love:

NUPTIAL BLESSING OVER THE COUPLE

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord
for these newly married spouses,
that he may graciously pour out his blessing upon them
and make them one in heart and mind.

Holy Father, creator of all things,
you made man and woman in your image
and blessed their union with the gift of love.
Look kindly upon N. and N.,

who today entrust their lives to one another
in the covenant of marriage.

Grant that their love may remain steadfast and faithful,
patient in trials, joyful in hope, and generous in forgiveness.
May they support one another in weakness,
encourage one another in goodness,
and walk together in every season of life.

Bless their home with peace and prayer.
May they always find strength in your presence
and discover each day the beauty of remaining faithful.

Grant also, Lord,
that they may be blessed with children,
be wise and loving parents,
and together bear witness to the holiness of family life.

And after a long and blessed life together,
may they come with all who love them
to the eternal banquet of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.
May this couple always preserve in their home
the peace that comes from faithful love, patient understanding,
and hearts ready to forgive one another.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.
Happy are those who remain faithful to the covenant of love
and are nourished by the grace of Christ.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Love becomes beautiful not because life is free from storms,
but because two hearts continue choosing one another through
every storm.
Today Christ has entered this union to strengthen,
heal, and sustain it.
May N. and N. always remember
that the deepest promise in marriage is not simply “I love you,”
but “I will remain.”

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at your table, O Lord,
we pray that these sacred mysteries
may strengthen N. and N.
in the covenant they have begun today.
May the grace of this Eucharist
teach them to love faithfully,
to forgive generously,
and to persevere courageously throughout their lives together.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May he strengthen your hearts in fidelity
and fill your home with lasting peace.

Amen.

May he grant that your love
will grow deeper through every joy and every trial,
and may your lives always reflect the faithful love of Christ.

Amen.

May almighty God bless all of you gathered here,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord
by lives of faithful love and steadfast commitment.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“True love is not proven by how strongly we feel on the wedding day,
but by how faithfully we remain through all the days that follow.”

27. Marriage as Mission and Witness

Is 61:1–3; Is 61:1–3

Theme: “A Marriage That Becomes Light: Love as Mission and Witness”

INTRODUCTION

In a small coastal village, there once stood a lighthouse whose keeper had only one task: keep the flame alive. Ships depended on it during storms. One night, villagers kept coming to him asking for oil — a fisherman for his lamp, a mother for her home, a traveller for his journey. Out of kindness, he gave away almost all the oil. Before dawn, the lighthouse went dark. That night, several ships crashed against the rocks. The next morning the keeper wept, not because he had been cruel, but because he had forgotten his first mission: to keep the light burning.

Dear friends, marriage is not only about two people finding happiness together; it is also about becoming a light for others. The world today has many houses, but too few homes; many voices, but too little hope; many relationships, but too little fidelity. Christian marriage is meant to become a lighthouse — a visible sign that faithful love is still possible, that forgiveness is still stronger than pride, and that God still dwells among His people.

But there are moments when our light grows dim — through selfishness, impatience, wounded words, or the failure to love generously. And so, before we celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord to rekindle in us the light of His mercy.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You have called Your people to become the light of the world: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, You teach us that love becomes credible through sacrifice and fidelity: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You send Christian families into the world as witnesses of hope and peace: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May Almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins, rekindle within us the light of His love,
strengthen us to become faithful witnesses of the Gospel
in our homes and in the world, and bring us to everlasting life.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God,
who call husband and wife to reflect before the world
the light of Your faithful love, pour out the grace of Your Holy Spirit
upon N. and N., that their marriage may become
a living witness of hope, compassion, and enduring fidelity.

Teach them to comfort the weary,
to strengthen one another in trials,
and to shine with the joy of the Gospel
amid the darkness of this world.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,
who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

HOMILY

Years ago, during a massive blackout in a crowded city, an elderly widow placed a single candle on her window. Soon another neighbour lit one from her flame, then another, and another. Within minutes an entire street glowed softly in the darkness. Journalists later asked her why she had lit the first candle. She simply replied, “Darkness spreads by itself. Light must be chosen.”

Today’s Gospel is about choosing light.

Jesus says to His disciples: “*You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world.*” Notice that He does not say, “You should try to become light.” He says, “*You are.*” In other words, every Christian marriage carries a mission from the very beginning. This wedding is not only a personal celebration; it is a public proclamation that love still has the power to heal the world.

The prophet Isaiah speaks of those who are sent “*to bind up broken hearts... to comfort those who mourn... to give them a garland instead of ashes.*” That is not only the mission of priests or missionaries. It is also the vocation of a husband and wife. Every Christian home is meant to become a place where wounds are healed, tears are understood, and people rediscover hope.

A married couple once celebrated their fiftieth anniversary. Someone asked the husband, “In fifty years, did you ever think of divorce?” The old man smiled and replied, “Divorce? Never. Murder once or twice — but never divorce.” Everyone laughed, but hidden in the humour was a profound truth: lasting love is not built on perfect compatibility; it is built on daily perseverance, forgiveness, and commitment.

The world often measures marriage by feelings. But feelings rise and fall like tides. Mission remains. Witness remains. Love becomes holy when it chooses to stay faithful even when emotions become tired.

A teacher once asked children to describe “home.” One child wrote: “Home is where the light stays on when I come back late.” That may be one of the most beautiful definitions of Christian marriage. Your vocation, dear couple, is to keep the light on for one another — during success and failure, health and sickness, certainty and confusion.

And that light will not remain inside these walls. One day, perhaps your children will learn what God is like by watching how you forgive each other. Guests will understand hospitality by entering your home. The lonely will rediscover courage because of your kindness. Your marriage will preach sermons no microphone can ever preach.

But every lamp needs oil.

Prayer is the oil.

Forgiveness is the oil.

Patience is the oil.

Shared sacrifice is the oil.

The Eucharist is the oil.

Without these, even beautiful love can slowly grow dark.

There is an old story about a traveller lost in a snowstorm. In the distance he saw a faint light from a cabin window. That tiny light saved his life. He later said, “It was small, but it was enough to keep me walking.”

Dear N. and N., your marriage does not need to become famous to change the world. It only needs to remain faithful. Even a small light becomes powerful when the night is dark.

And perhaps that is the deepest meaning of today's wedding: not simply that two people found each other, but that God is lighting a lamp for the world.

May your home always become a place where tired hearts find warmth, where faith survives difficult seasons, and where Christ Himself is recognized in the way you love one another.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

My dear brothers and sisters,
God calls Christian families to become light for the world and witnesses of His faithful love. Trusting in His goodness, let us now place our prayers before Him.

1. For the Church, that she may continue to shine as a sign of hope, mercy, and truth in a wounded world, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

2. For N. and N., that their marriage may become a living Gospel of fidelity, forgiveness, and joy for all who know them, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

3. For married couples experiencing trials, misunderstandings, or loneliness, that God may renew the light of love within their homes, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

4. For families burdened by poverty, sickness, grief, or division, that they may find comfort and strength through the support of loving hearts, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For all of us gathered here, that our lives may reflect the light of Christ through compassion, truth, and generosity, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father,

You have called us to walk as children of light. Hear the prayers we offer with faith, and make our lives radiant with the love of Your Son, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters,
that this sacrifice, offered for a couple called to become a light in the world through faithful love and generous witness, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give You thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in Your wisdom

You have made the union of husband and wife
a visible sign of Your love for humanity.

In Christian marriage

You call two hearts to become one light,
so that through fidelity, sacrifice, and tenderness
they may reveal Your presence in the world.

Through their love,

the sorrowful are comforted, children are nurtured in faith,
and hope is kept alive amid the uncertainties of life.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of Your glory, as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray with confidence to the Father,
who calls every Christian home to become a place of light,
forgiveness, and peace.

NUPTIAL BLESSING OVER THE COUPLE

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord
for these newly married spouses,
that He may graciously pour out His blessing upon them.

Holy Father,
maker of the whole world,
who created man and woman in Your own image
and willed that their union should reveal Your faithful love,
look kindly upon N. and N.,
who today begin their married life in Christ.

Pour upon them the grace of the Holy Spirit,
that their home may become a light for others,
a refuge for the weary, and a witness of hope in the world.

Grant that they may remain faithful in joy and in sorrow,
patient in trials, grateful in blessings,
and steadfast in mutual love.

Teach them to forgive quickly, to speak kindly,
to carry one another's burdens,
and to seek You in every season of life.

May they be blessed with children,
and may their family grow in wisdom, faith, and compassion,
so that future generations
may come to know Your goodness through them.

And after a long and fruitful life together,
may they come with all the saints
to the eternal wedding feast of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
who said to Your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins, but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with Your
will.

May the homes of Your faithful become places where reconciliation is
stronger than anger and where love continues to shine even in
difficult times.

Who live and reign for ever and ever.

Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold Him who takes away the sins of the world.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.
Blessed also are those who allow Christ to nourish their love,
so that their lives may become light for the world.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

A lamp does not shine for itself.
It burns so that others may find their way.

Today Christ has entered this marriage through the Eucharist.
The same Lord who feeds this couple
now sends them forth to become bread for one another in sacrifice,
patience, and tenderness.
Love becomes holy when it gives light even on difficult days.
May this home never lose the quiet flame of prayer,
kindness, and faithful presence.
And may all who enter it leave with greater hope in God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at the table of Your heavenly banquet,
we humbly ask You, Lord,
to strengthen N. and N.
through the grace of this sacrament,
that their marriage may radiate the light of Christ
through fidelity, compassion, and joyful service.
May their home become a blessing for others
and a living witness to the power of Your love.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May He make your home radiant with faith, hope, and charity.
May He strengthen you in times of trial, deepen your joy in times of
blessing, and make your marriage a light for all who know you.

May He bless your families, your future children, and all whose lives
you will touch through your witness of love.

And may Almighty God bless you,
the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your lives.

And may this newly married couple shine before the world as
witnesses that faithful love still reflects the presence of God.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“A Christian marriage is not merely two people living together;
it is two hearts keeping a light burning for the world.”

28. Healing Past Wounds Through Love

Isaiah 61:1–4; Mk 2,1-12

Theme: “Love That Lowers the Roof to Heal.”

True Christian marriage is not the union of two perfect people, but the covenant of two wounded hearts who allow Christ to enter, heal, restore, and make them rise together. Just as the friends in the Gospel refused to let obstacles prevent healing, married love is called to become a courageous, healing love that carries, forgives, restores, and never gives up on the other.

INTRODUCTION

There is a story of an old Japanese art called *kintsugi*. When a precious bowl breaks, the artist does not throw it away. The cracks are filled with gold. The fracture is not hidden; it becomes the most beautiful part of the vessel. What was broken becomes more precious because it was healed.

Today, as N. and N. stand before God, they do not come pretending to be flawless people. They come with their histories, fears, memories, wounds, and hopes. And God does not ask them to hide their cracks. The Lord who says through Isaiah, “He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,” now enters their love not merely to bless their happiness, but to heal whatever life has bruised within them.

Yet all of us know that we have sometimes wounded others and resisted God’s healing grace. Therefore, before we celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us open our hearts to the mercy of Christ who alone can forgive, restore, and make us rise again.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you came to bind up the broken-hearted and restore hope to wounded lives: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, you forgave the paralytic before you healed his body and revealed the power of mercy: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you call husbands and wives to carry one another in love through every burden and trial: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God, who heals the broken-hearted, forgives our sins, and raises us up through the mercy of his Son, have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who revealed in your Son the power to heal wounded hearts and restore fallen lives, look with love upon N. and N., who today enter the covenant of holy marriage. Grant that through patience, forgiveness, and steadfast love, they may become for one another a refuge in sorrow, strength in weakness, and joy in every season of life. May their union reveal the tenderness of Christ who makes all things new.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

HOMILY

A man once carried his elderly wife into the sea every evening.

People on the beach watched him with curiosity. Her body had become weak after a stroke. She could no longer walk properly. Yet every sunset he lifted her into his arms, carried her gently into the shallow water, and stood there holding her while the waves touched her feet.

One day someone asked him, “Why do you do this every evening?”

The old man smiled and replied, “Because before sickness entered our lives, she carried me for forty years.”

That is marriage.

Not romance alone. Not perfection. Not the absence of wounds. Marriage is carrying each other when life becomes heavy.

Today’s Gospel is one of the most moving scenes in the New Testament. A paralysed man cannot reach Jesus on his own. So four friends carry him. When the crowd blocks the entrance, they climb the roof, tear it open, and lower him down before Christ.

Imagine the scene: dust falling from the ceiling, shocked faces in the crowd, the determination of those friends. Love literally breaks open a roof because it refuses to give up on someone wounded.

And Jesus does something unexpected. Before healing the man’s body, he heals his soul:

“Son, your sins are forgiven.”

Because some wounds are deeper than what the eye can see.

Every person enters marriage carrying invisible scars. Sometimes from childhood. Sometimes from disappointment. Sometimes from betrayal, loneliness, fear, failure, or grief. Many couples believe marriage works when two strong people come together. But Christian marriage often becomes holy when two wounded people allow God to heal them together.

Isaiah speaks today of the Messiah who comes “to bind up the broken-hearted.” Notice: God does not discard wounded hearts. He binds them. He restores them.

A young woman once brought a cracked clay lamp to her grandmother and said, “It’s broken. Shall I throw it away?” The grandmother lit a candle inside it and placed it near the window. Through the cracks, light poured into the darkness with stunning beauty. The grandmother said, “Sometimes the cracks are where the light escapes.”

N. and N., there will be days when one of you cannot walk emotionally or spiritually. Days of exhaustion. Days of misunderstanding. Days when one feels weak while the other must carry. In those moments, your vocation is not to ask, “Why are you like this?” but “How can I help bring you closer to Christ?”

That is why marriage is sacred. You are not merely becoming companions. You are becoming healers for one another.

And healing always requires three things: honesty, forgiveness, and perseverance.

Honesty means removing the roof instead of hiding behind it. Forgiveness means refusing to weaponize each other’s weaknesses. Perseverance means staying even when healing takes time.

A doctor once said, “The deepest human need is not to be fixed, but to know someone will stay while healing happens.”

That is what Christ does for us. And that is what Christian spouses are called to do for each other.

The beautiful truth is this: the paralysed man in the Gospel rises not only healed, but transformed. The crowd came expecting a miracle of movement. Christ gave him a miracle of dignity, forgiveness, and new life. That is what Jesus wants for this marriage.

Not merely a successful marriage.

Not merely a peaceful marriage.

But a redeeming marriage.

A healing marriage.

A marriage where grace is stronger than wounds.

And one day, many years from now, when age weakens the body, when struggles have come and gone, when tears and joys have shaped your life together, may people look at your love and say: “There was something holy there. They carried each other to Christ.” I end with another story.

After a devastating earthquake, rescuers found an elderly couple beneath the ruins of their home. The husband had shielded his wife with his own body for hours. When they finally pulled them out, exhausted and injured, the woman whispered through tears, “Even under the rubble, I was never afraid because he was holding me.” That is Christian marriage.

Not the absence of falling stones.

But the certainty that even beneath the rubble of life, someone remains beside you — and Christ remains above you, healing, lifting, and saying again and again: “Rise.”

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered around Christ who heals the broken-hearted and restores hope to wounded lives, let us present our prayers with confidence.

1. For the Church, that she may continue to bring healing, mercy, and compassion to all who are burdened by pain or division, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

2. For N. and N., that their marriage may become a refuge of forgiveness, tenderness, and faithful love, where each continually brings the other closer to Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

3. For married couples who struggle with hurt, disappointment, or broken trust, that God may restore hope and renew their love, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

4. For families wounded by conflict, illness, grief, or separation, that the Lord may bind up every broken heart and grant reconciliation and peace, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For all gathered here, that we may learn to carry one another’s burdens with patience, compassion, and steadfast love, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

God of mercy and healing,

you sent your Son to restore the broken-hearted and raise up those who had fallen. Hear the prayers we place before you today and strengthen us with your grace. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice, offered for the healing and strengthening of N. and N. and for all God's people, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in your great mercy
you do not abandon your people in their weakness,
but through your Son
you heal the brokenhearted, forgive sins,
and raise up those weighed down by sorrow.

In the covenant of Christian marriage
you reveal the tenderness of Christ for his Church,
teaching husbands and wives
to carry one another with patience and faithful love.
Through joy and suffering alike,
you shape their hearts in compassion
so that their home may become a sign of your healing presence in
the world.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching, let us pray to the Father who heals, forgives, and gathers his children into one family of love.

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for N. and N.,
who now begin their married life at this altar,
that God may unite them in lasting love
and fill their home with peace.

Holy Father,
creator of love and source of all healing,
pour out your blessing upon these your servants, N. and N.

Grant that they may always recognize in one another
a companion in weakness,
a comfort in sorrow,
and a partner in hope.

When wounds arise,
teach them to forgive quickly.
When burdens grow heavy,
teach them to carry one another with tenderness.
When joy fills their home,
teach them gratitude and humility.

May their love reflect the compassion of Christ,
who never abandons his people
but restores them with mercy and grace.

Bless them with health of mind and body,
with peace in their home,
with faithful friends and supportive family,
and, according to your will,
the gift and blessing of children,
whom they may raise in wisdom, faith, and love.

May they grow old together in steadfast devotion,
and after the trials of this earthly life,
may they rejoice forever in the fullness of your kingdom.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you said to your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.
Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your
will.
Heal the wounds that divide hearts and families, and teach us to
become instruments of reconciliation and tenderness for one
another.
Who live and reign for ever and ever.
Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who heals the broken-hearted and takes away the sins of
the world.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Love becomes holy not when life is free from wounds,
but when hearts remain open to healing.
Today Christ has entered this marriage
as the divine physician of the soul.
May N. and N. never be afraid of each other's weakness,
but always become a place of mercy, refuge, and strength.
For the hands that carry one another in love
will one day discover that Christ himself has carried them all along.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at the table of your mercy,
we pray, O Lord,
that N. and N.,
strengthened by this heavenly sacrament,
may remain united in faithful love
and become for one another
a source of healing, courage, and peace.
May all who encounter them
discover something of the tenderness of Christ
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord Jesus Christ,
who healed the broken-hearted and raised up the weak,
strengthen your hearts and preserve your love.

Amen.

May he grant you patience in trials,
courage in difficulties,
and joy in every blessing you share together.

Amen.

May your home become a place of mercy, peace, and welcome,
where wounds are healed and love never fails.

Amen.

And may almighty God bless all of you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by loving, healing, and carrying one
another through every season of life.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

A strong marriage is not made of two people who never fall, but of
two people who keep carrying each other back to Christ.

29. Humility and Self-Giving in Marriage

Phil 2,3-5; Lk 14,7-11

Theme: “Love Kneels Before It Stands Above: Humility and Self-Giving in Marriage”

INTRODUCTION

In Japan there is an old story about a master potter whose finest bowl was accidentally broken by his young apprentice. Terrified, the boy expected anger and humiliation. Instead, the master knelt beside him and quietly helped gather the shattered pieces. Years later, the apprentice said that in that moment he understood greatness for the first time: true greatness does not crush another person’s weakness; it bends down to protect it. Love becomes believable when pride kneels.

Today, through the words of Saint Paul and the Gospel of Luke, God reveals the secret strength of marriage. “Do nothing out of selfish ambition,” Paul says, and Jesus teaches that the one who humbles himself will be exalted. In a world that often measures relationships by power, success, and self-fulfilment, Christian marriage becomes a living witness that the deepest joy is found in self-giving love.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, we also recognize how often pride, impatience, selfishness, and the need to win can wound relationships and close hearts. Let us therefore ask the Lord for mercy, that He may teach us to love with humility and to serve one another with generous hearts.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You emptied Yourself and became the servant of all:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You teach us that the humble will be lifted up:

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You call husbands and wives to love one another with self-giving hearts: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God,
who teaches us that love grows through humility and service,
forgive us our sins, heal the pride and selfishness within us,
strengthen us in faithful charity,
and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

COLLECT

O God,
who revealed in Your Son
that true greatness is found in humility and self-giving love,
look with kindness upon Your servants gathered here today.
As You unite N. and N. in the covenant of marriage,
teach them to seek not their own glory
but the good of one another,
so that their home may become a living reflection
of Christ's gentle and faithful love for His Church.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,
who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

HOMILY

A traveller once visited a monastery high in the mountains. He expected to find holy men discussing great spiritual mysteries. Instead, he saw an old monk quietly washing the dirty feet of elderly brothers who could no longer walk properly. The traveller asked, "How long have you done this?" The monk smiled and replied, "Long enough to discover that love survives not through grand words but through small acts done without pride."

That is the heart of Christian marriage.

The world often says: *Stand above. Protect yourself. Be first. Win the argument. Demand recognition.* But the Gospel says something radically different: *Choose the lower place. Serve. Listen. Bend before you break another person's spirit.* Jesus does not describe humiliation; He describes the freedom of love that no longer needs to compete.

Saint Paul gives one of the most beautiful instructions ever written for married life: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit." Every marriage will eventually discover this truth: love is not destroyed first by hatred; it is usually eroded by small selfishness—by the need always to be right, always to be noticed, always to have the final word.

There is a Jewish story about two brothers who shared a field. One was married with children; the other lived alone. During harvest season, the unmarried brother thought, "My brother has a family to support; he needs more grain than I do." Secretly at night he carried sacks into his brother's barn. But the married brother thought, "My brother has no one to care for him in old age; he needs more than

I do.” And so he secretly carried sacks into his brother’s barn. One night they met in the darkness, each carrying grain for the other. According to tradition, that place became holy ground because love had conquered selfishness.

Marriage becomes holy ground when husband and wife stop asking, “What am I getting?” and begin asking, “How can I bless the other?”

In today’s Gospel, Jesus speaks about taking the lower seat at the banquet. Why? Because humility creates space for love. Pride fills every room with noise about oneself; humility makes room for another person’s heart.

The danger in marriage is not imperfection. Every couple is imperfect. The real danger is pride disguised as strength. Sometimes the strongest words in marriage are not “I told you so,” but “I am sorry.” Sometimes the holiest act is not winning an argument, but protecting communion.

There is a moving story from the life of a couple married for over sixty years. When the wife developed memory loss, she no longer recognized her husband. Every morning he still dressed carefully and visited her in the nursing home. A nurse once asked him, “Why do you go every day when she doesn’t even know who you are?” The old man replied softly, “Because I still know who she is.”

That is covenant love. That is Christ-like love. Love that does not depend on convenience, applause, or reward. Love that remains faithful when emotions fade, when beauty changes, when life becomes difficult. The humility of marriage says: *I will continue to choose you.*

Dear N. and N., today you are not simply promising to stay together. You are promising to become a refuge for one another. A place

where wounds are not mocked. A place where weaknesses are carried together. A place where forgiveness is quicker than pride.

And this humility is not weakness. Christ Himself knelt to wash feet. The One who created the stars chose the towel and basin. Heaven entered history on its knees.

One final story.

During an earthquake in Italy many years ago, rescuers found a mother beneath the rubble. She had curved her body over her little child as the ceiling collapsed. The mother died protecting the child beneath her, but the child survived unharmed. On the wall beside them rescuers later found written in dust: “Love made me forget myself.”

That is the Gospel.

That is marriage.

And that is the kind of love that will make your home strong enough to survive every storm.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Celebrating God’s call to humble and self-giving love, let us now place before Him our prayers and the needs of the Church and the world.

1. For the Church: that she may always reflect the humility of Christ and become a sign of compassionate love in the world, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

2. For N. and N.: that their marriage may be marked by patience, gentleness, forgiveness, and joyful service to one another, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For married couples everywhere: that they may overcome pride and division and grow daily in faithful and sacrificial love, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For families experiencing conflict, loneliness, or suffering: that the Lord may heal wounded hearts and restore peace within homes, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For all gathered here: that we may learn from Christ the beauty of humility and place the needs of others before our own, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father,
You revealed in Jesus that true greatness is found in humble love.
Hear the prayers we offer today and strengthen us to live as faithful servants of one another. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice,
offered in the spirit of humble and self-giving love,
may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give You thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in Your wisdom You created man and woman in love
and called them to reflect the faithful covenant
between Christ and His Church.
In Your Son, who humbled Himself for the salvation of the world,
You revealed that love reaches its fullness
not through power, but through self-giving service.

Today You unite N. and N. in the sacrament of Matrimony,
that through patience, humility, and mutual care
they may become a living sign of Your presence.
May their home be filled with mercy in times of weakness,
faithfulness in times of trial,
and joy in times of blessing.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of Your glory,
as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray to the Father who calls us to live not for ourselves alone,
but in humble and faithful love for one another.

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for N. and N.,
now joined in holy Matrimony,
that God who has brought them together in love
may sustain them by His grace.

Lord our God,
You created man and woman in Your image
and blessed their union with the gift of love.
Pour out now the abundance of Your blessing upon N. and N.

Grant that they may always seek one another's good
before their own,

bearing each other's burdens with patience and tenderness.

Teach them the humility that listens,
the generosity that forgives,
and the faithfulness that endures every trial.

May their home be filled with peace, laughter, and trust.
May they comfort one another in sorrow,
strengthen one another in weakness,
and rejoice together in all the blessings of life.

Bless them with the gift of children,
that they may lovingly welcome new life
and raise their family in wisdom, faith, and compassion.

And after a long and happy life together on earth,
may they come with all the saints
to the eternal wedding feast of heaven.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
You said to Your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you;
look not on our sins, but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with Your will.
Teach us especially to build peace through humility, patience, and
selfless love within our families and relationships.

Who live and reign for ever and ever.

Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who teaches us the way of
humble and self-giving love. Blessed are those called to the supper
of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Love grows beautiful when it learns to kneel.
Today Christ has given Himself completely to us in the Eucharist,
showing once again that real love is never self-centered.
In every act of patience,
every quiet forgiveness,
every hidden sacrifice, heaven touches earth.
May this couple always remember that the strongest marriages
are not built by pride,
but by hearts willing to serve one another with joy.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at Your table, O Lord,
in the sacrament of perfect love,
we pray that You strengthen N. and N.
in the grace of humble and faithful charity.
May the Body and Blood of Christ
teach them to give themselves generously to one another
and help all of us to walk in the path of peace and selfless love.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you steadfast in humble and faithful love.

Amen.

May He grant that your home be filled with patience, forgiveness, joy, and peace.

Amen.

May He teach you to serve one another generously, to remain faithful in every season of life, and to rejoice together in the gift of family and friendship.

Amen.

And may almighty God bless you all,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by lives of humble and self-giving love.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“The happiest marriage is not the one where two people stop needing forgiveness, but the one where love becomes greater than pride.”

30. The Eucharist and Married Love

1 Cor 10,16-17; Jn 6,51-58

Theme: “One Bread, One Love, One Life: The Eucharist as the Heart of Married Love.”

INTRODUCTION

A man once visited an old married couple celebrating sixty years together. He asked them, “What kept your marriage alive for so long?” The old woman smiled gently and said, “Every morning before breakfast, we sat at the same table. Some days we had feast meals, some days only bread and tea. But we never stopped sharing the table.” Then her husband added quietly, “Love dies when people stop coming to the table.”

Today, dear friends, we gather around another table — the table of the Eucharist. St. Paul tells us: “*Because the loaf of bread is one, we though many are one body.*” And Jesus declares in the Gospel: “*I am the living bread come down from heaven.*” Marriage is not merely sustained by romance, emotions, or compatibility. It survives and flourishes when husband and wife continually return to the Lord’s table and learn again how to give themselves as bread for one another.

But if we are honest, we know that we do not always love like Christ. Sometimes we withhold ourselves. Sometimes pride, impatience, wounds, and selfishness weaken communion. And so, before we celebrate these sacred mysteries and witness this covenant of love, let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord to make us one in Him.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You are the living Bread come down from heaven to nourish our hearts and heal our divisions: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, You taught us that true love is found in self-giving and sacrifice: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You gather us into one body through the Eucharist and call married couples to unity and fidelity: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God, who feeds His people with the Bread of Life, forgive us for every failure in love, heal what is wounded within us, strengthen us in communion with Him and with one another, and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

COLLECT

O God,
who in the Eucharist reveal the mystery of perfect love
and in marriage call husband and wife
to become one heart and one life,
look with kindness upon Your servants gathered here today.
May their love be nourished at the table of Christ,
strengthened through sacrifice and fidelity,
and become for the world a living sign
of the communion You desire for all humanity.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,
who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

HOMILY

In the ruins of World War II, a small village church in Germany was almost completely destroyed. Amid the rubble, the people found a large crucifix. The body of Christ was damaged; both hands had been blown away. The villagers wanted to replace the statue, but one elderly woman said, “No. Leave it exactly as it is.” Beneath the crucifix they later placed these words: **“Christ has no hands now on earth but yours.”** That is marriage.

Today, in this Eucharist, Christ places His love into the hands of this couple. From this day onward, they become the visible hands of Christ for one another — comforting, feeding, lifting, forgiving, healing, carrying.

The Eucharist is not merely something Catholics attend. The Eucharist is a way of loving. Jesus says in today’s Gospel: *“The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.”* Notice: Jesus does not merely give bread. He becomes bread. Bread is broken, shared, consumed, given away so that others may live. That is exactly what marriage becomes.

A young wife once said after many difficult years caring for her sick husband, “I thought marriage was about finding someone to make me happy. Instead, I discovered marriage is learning how to become bread for another person.” That is one of the deepest definitions of Christian love.

And this is why the Eucharist and marriage belong together. At every Mass, Jesus says: “This is my body, given for you.” In every true marriage, husband and wife slowly learn to say the same thing: “My time for you. My strength for you. My patience for you. My future for you. My life for you.”

The world often speaks about love as consumption: “What can I get?” Christ speaks of love as communion: “What can I give?”

St. Paul says today: *“Because the bread is one, we though many are one body.”* Marriage is not the disappearance of individuality; it is the miracle of communion. Two histories, two personalities, two imperfect lives become one shared pilgrimage.

But communion is costly.

Bread reaches the table only after wheat is crushed, kneaded, and baked by fire. Likewise, deep married love is formed through misunderstandings survived, tears forgiven, illnesses endured, disappointments healed, sacrifices silently made. The strongest marriages are rarely the easiest marriages; they are the marriages where two people kept returning to the table of grace.

There is a beautiful story about an elderly couple dining in a restaurant. The husband carefully cut his dessert in half and gave the larger portion to his wife. A young waiter smiled and asked, “After all these years, you still divide everything equally?” The old man replied softly, “No. We stopped counting long ago.”

That is Eucharistic love.

Love matures when generosity becomes instinctive.

Dear couple, there will be days when affection comes easily. There will also be days of exhaustion, silence, misunderstanding, or pain. On those days, remember this altar. Return to this table. Because the Eucharist is not food for perfect people; it is strength for people who wish to keep loving.

The Eucharist teaches married couples three great truths:

First: **Love must be received before it can be given.**

No one can endlessly give without first allowing Christ to nourish the soul.

Second: **Love becomes real through sacrifice.**

A love that costs nothing eventually means nothing.

Third: **Love creates communion.**

Not domination. Not competition. Communion.

And from this communion, new life flows. Perhaps children. Certainly kindness. Hospitality. Faith. Healing. Hope. Every Christian family is meant to become a small living tabernacle where Christ dwells.

I end with another story.

A little boy once watched his parents receive Holy Communion every Sunday. One day he asked his mother, “Why do you and dad always go together?” She answered, “Because we need the same strength to love each other.” Years later, after the father died, that son remembered seeing his widowed mother still walk slowly to Communion every morning. When someone asked why she never missed Mass, she answered through tears, “For fifty years Jesus fed our marriage. Now He feeds my memories, my loneliness, and my hope until I see him again.”

That is the power of Eucharistic love:

love that feeds, love that remains, love that outlives death itself.

And so today, before this altar, Christ whispers once more:

“Take and eat.”

Not only this sacred Bread —

but also the sacred vocation of becoming bread for one another, until love leads you both to the eternal wedding feast of heaven.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

United as one body in Christ and trusting in the Lord who nourishes every vocation with the Bread of Life, let us place our prayers before Him.

1. For the Church throughout the world, that she may always become a living Eucharistic community, nourishing humanity with compassion, unity, and hope, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

2. For this newly married couple, that their love may always be rooted in the Eucharist, strengthened in sacrifice, joyful in service, and faithful in every season of life, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

3. For married couples who struggle with wounds, misunderstandings, sickness, or loneliness, that Christ the Living Bread may heal, strengthen, and renew them, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

4. For families throughout the world, especially those lacking daily bread, peace, or dignity, that God may provide for their needs through generous hearts, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

5. For our departed loved ones and all who once shared the Eucharistic table with us on earth, that they may now rejoice at the eternal banquet of heaven, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father, You nourish us with the Bread of Life and unite us in the love of Christ. Hear the prayers we place before You today and keep us always in communion with You and with one another. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice, in which Christ gives Himself completely for the life of the world, and in which this couple offers their love to God and to one another, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give You thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in Your wisdom and love
You have made marriage a sacred covenant,
through which husband and wife
become a living sign of Christ's love for His Church.

In the Eucharist,
Your Son continues to nourish His people
with the Bread of eternal life,
teaching us that love reaches its fullness
not in taking, but in giving.

Through this holy mystery,
You strengthen the union of this couple gathered before Your altar
today.
May their home become a place of communion,
their table a place of welcome,
and their lives a joyful offering of love.

And so, with Angels and Saints,
we proclaim Your glory, as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching, let us pray together as God's family, trusting in the Father who gives us our daily bread and teaches us to become bread for one another.

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for this bride and groom,
who come today to the altar of God,
that through their union in Christ
they may grow in communion of heart and spirit.
Holy Father, Creator of love and source of all life,
pour out the grace of Your blessing upon these newlyweds.

May they remain united at the table of the Eucharist,
drawing strength from the Body and Blood of Christ.
Teach them to love generously,
to forgive quickly, to carry one another's burdens,
and to become signs of Your faithful love in the world.

When joy fills their home, may they praise You with grateful hearts.
When trials come, may they remain steadfast in hope.
When they are weary, may Your presence renew them.

Bless them with children, that they may lovingly welcome new life,
raise their family in faith,
and hand on the light of the Gospel to future generations.
Grant that all who enter their home
may find peace, kindness, and hospitality there.
And after a long and blessed life together on earth,
may they come at last to the eternal wedding feast of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
You said to Your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.
Look not on our sins, but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with Your will.
May the peace flowing from this Eucharistic table strengthen this
couple in every trial and make their home a dwelling place of
reconciliation, tenderness, and enduring love.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold Him who becomes the Bread of Life for the world
and the strength of every faithful marriage.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Love survives not because two people are strong enough,
but because God remains present among them.
Today Christ has fed us with heavenly Bread.
May this couple never forget
that every Eucharist is an invitation
to begin loving again,
forgiving again,
hoping again,
and giving themselves again.
For those who learn to kneel together before God
will always find the strength to remain together in love.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at the table of Your Son,
we thank You, Lord,
for nourishing us with the Bread of Life.

May the sacrament we have received
strengthen this newly married couple in fidelity and joy,
teach them to live in mutual self-giving,
and make their home a sign of Christ's abiding presence
in the world.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father,
who has called you to communion in love,
keep you united in heart and steadfast in fidelity.

Amen.

May Christ,
who gives Himself as the Bread of Life,
nourish your marriage with peace, sacrifice, and enduring joy.

Amen.

May the Holy Spirit
make your home a place of faith, welcome, tenderness,
and hope for all who enter it.

Amen.

And may almighty God bless all of you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your lives,
and may this couple always remain one in Christ,
nourished by the Bread of Life
and strengthened to become bread for one another.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“The Eucharist teaches married couples
the deepest meaning of love:
not merely to find happiness in one another,
but to become bread broken
and shared for the life of the other.”

31. Unity Amid Differences

Rom 12:3–18; Jn 17,20-23

Theme: “One Heart, Many Differences: Love that Creates Communion”

INTRODUCTION

A violinist once spoke about the secret of an orchestra. He said that if every instrument tried to sound the same, there would be no music — only noise. The beauty of a symphony comes from difference: the deep cello, the bright trumpet, the gentle flute, the steady drum. Each keeps its own sound, yet all listen to one another until harmony is born. Marriage is much the same. Two people do not enter marriage because they are identical, but because love teaches them how to become one without losing who they are.

Today, in the Letter to the Romans, Saint Paul urges us to “live in harmony with one another,” while Jesus prays in the Gospel “that they may all be one.” Notice: Jesus does not pray that we become copies of one another, but that love may unite hearts even amid differences. The deepest unity is not uniformity; it is communion born from humility, patience, forgiveness, and self-giving love.

Yet all of us know how often pride, impatience, wounded words, and selfishness break communion. As this couple stands before God to begin their married life, we too acknowledge the moments when we failed to build unity in our homes, friendships, and communities. Let us therefore prepare ourselves to celebrate these sacred mysteries by calling to mind our sins.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You prayed that Your people may be one in love and truth: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, You reconcile divided hearts and heal wounded relationships: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You gather many lives into one Body through Your saving love: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God have mercy on us,
heal every division within us,
forgive us the sins that wound communion and love,
and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

COLLECT

O God,
who in Your wisdom created man and woman
to become one heart and one life in love,
look with kindness upon Your servants gathered here today.
Teach them to cherish one another amid their differences,
to grow in patience and mutual understanding,
and to become a living sign of the unity for which Christ prayed.
May their home be filled with peace, forgiveness, and joy,
so that all who encounter them may see Your love at work among us.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,
who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

HOMILY

A father once gave his married daughter two fragile clay pots on her wedding day. One was painted red, the other blue. He told her, “Strike them together.” She hesitated but obeyed. Both cracked. Then he said, “Now place them side by side and fill them with flowers.” Years later she understood his lesson: marriage is not about crashing against one another demanding sameness; it is about standing together and creating beauty despite fragility.

That is exactly what Jesus speaks about today.

In the Gospel, Jesus prays one of the most moving prayers in all Scripture: “Father, may they all be one.” Imagine that — on the eve of His suffering, Jesus was thinking about unity. He knew how easily human beings divide: by pride, ego, stubbornness, hurt, misunderstanding, and the silent walls we build around ourselves.

And Saint Paul, in Romans, gives practical wisdom for unity: “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought.” That line alone could save many marriages.

Because most marriages do not collapse from one dramatic moment. Often, they weaken through little refusals:

“I will not apologize.”

“I must win this argument.”

“You must become like me.”

But love cannot breathe where ego occupies all the space.

There is an old story about a couple married for over sixty years. Someone asked them, “How did you stay together so long?” The old woman smiled and said, “We belonged to a generation that repaired things instead of throwing them away.” That is holy wisdom. Today

the world often treats relationships like disposable objects. But Christian marriage says: “We will repair, forgive, rebuild, begin again.”

The readings today do not promise a life without differences. This couple will discover differences in habits, opinions, emotions, expectations, and even ways of loving. One may speak quickly; the other may need silence. One may dream boldly; the other may move cautiously. But unity does not come from eliminating differences. It comes from learning to carry them with tenderness.

Think of stained-glass windows in a cathedral. Each piece of glass has a different colour and shape. Alone, the fragments seem insignificant. But when sunlight passes through them together, they become something breathtaking. So too in marriage: when the light of Christ shines through two different lives united in love, something holy appears.

And that unity becomes a witness to the world.

Jesus says, “That the world may believe.” In other words, a loving marriage becomes evangelization. People begin to believe in God when they see forgiveness after hurt, patience during hardship, fidelity during trials, and tenderness that survives time.

One more story.

During a severe earthquake in Japan, rescuers found an elderly couple trapped beneath debris. The husband’s arm was broken, and the wife was weak from hunger. Yet when rescuers reached them, they saw the husband had used his uninjured hand to shield his wife from falling stones for nearly two days. Later he quietly said, “If one of us had to suffer more, let it be me.”

That is marriage at its most Christ-like: not “How much can I receive?” but “How much can I give?”

Dear couple, today you are not promising a perfect life. You are promising faithful love. There will be days of laughter and days of misunderstanding; seasons of abundance and seasons of struggle. But if Christ remains at the center, your differences will not divide you — they will deepen you.

Because the goal of marriage is not merely to live together. The goal is communion: two lives becoming a living reflection of God’s love.

And so I leave you with this final image.

In the ancient world, builders sometimes bound stones together with iron clamps hidden beneath the surface. From outside, people saw only the beauty of the building. They did not see what held it together. In Christian marriage, that hidden strength is Christ Himself. When love is anchored in Him, two imperfect people can build something that endures storms, time, suffering, and even death.

And that is the miracle we celebrate today:
not the disappearance of differences,
but the triumph of love over them.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

United in Christ, who prayed that His people may be one, let us bring our prayers before God our loving Father.

1. For the Church: that she may be a sign of reconciliation and unity in a divided world, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

2. For this newly married couple: that amid all differences they may grow daily in understanding, patience, forgiveness, and faithful love, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

3. For married couples everywhere: especially those struggling with conflict, misunderstanding, or separation, that God may heal and strengthen them, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

4. For families and communities: that respect, humility, and compassion may overcome division and bitterness, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For all gathered here: that the Eucharist may deepen our communion with Christ and with one another, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Father of love and unity,
hear the prayers we place before You today.
May the love revealed in Christ bind us together
in peace and communion.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters,
that this sacrifice of love and thanksgiving,
offered for this couple who seek unity in Christ
amid all the differences of life,
may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give You thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in Your wisdom You created man and woman
to walk together in love,
so that through mutual self-giving
they might reveal the beauty of communion.
In Christ Your Son,
You taught us that true unity is born not from sameness,
but from hearts transformed by mercy, humility, and sacrifice.

Today You unite these servants in the covenant of marriage,
that amid the many differences of life
they may become one in faith, hope, and love.
Through their fidelity and tenderness
may their home become a sign of Your presence
and a witness to the unity for which Christ prayed.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of Your glory,
as without end we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray with confidence to the Father
who gathers His children into one family of love:

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for this bride and groom,
who come today to be united in Christ,
that He may pour out the grace of His blessing upon them.

O God,
who by Your mighty power created all things
and in Your loving wisdom made man and woman
to become one in heart and life,
look graciously upon these newlyweds.

Grant that amid all the differences and changes of life
they may remain firmly united in mutual love.
Teach them to listen before speaking,
to forgive before resentment grows,
and to seek always the good of one another.

May their home be filled with kindness and peace.
May they support each other in times of joy and sorrow,
health and sickness, abundance and need.
Strengthen their fidelity, deepen their friendship,
and let Christ remain the unseen foundation of their marriage.

Bless them with the gift of children,
that they may lovingly welcome new life
and raise their family in faith, wisdom, and compassion.

And after a long and blessed life together,
may they come with all the saints
to the eternal wedding feast of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
who said to Your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins, but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with Your will.
May this couple always overcome division with love
and transform every difference into deeper communion.
Who live and reign for ever and ever.
Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold Him who takes away the sins of the world.
Through this sacred banquet
Christ gathers many hearts into one communion of love.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Love grows beautiful not when two people become identical,
but when they learn to carry each other with patience and grace.
Today Christ has nourished this couple with the Bread of Life
so that their marriage
may become a living reflection of His own faithful love.
May every difference become an opportunity
for deeper understanding,
every wound a path toward forgiveness,
and every joy a reason for thanksgiving.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at the table of Your love, we pray, O Lord,
that this holy communion may strengthen these newlyweds
to remain united in heart and spirit throughout their lives.
Teach them to bear one another's burdens with patience,
to rejoice in one another's gifts,
and to become a sign of Christ's peace in the world.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you united in faithful love.
Amen.

May He grant you patience in moments of difference,
courage in times of trial, and joy in the gift of one another. **Amen.**

May your home become a place of peace, reconciliation, and
welcome, where Christ Himself is always present. **Amen.**

And may almighty God bless all of you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by building unity through love,
forgiveness, and faithful communion.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

Unity in marriage is not the absence of differences;
it is the decision to love each other through them.

32. God's Timing and Divine Providence in Love

Ecclesiastes 3,1-11; Mt 6,25-34

Theme: "Love Blossoms in God's Perfect Time"

God's providence does not rush, delay, or forget. In every season of life, He quietly prepares hearts, heals wounds, opens doors, and leads two lives together according to His perfect timing. Christian marriage is not merely the result of human planning, but a sacred trust in the God who "makes everything beautiful in its time."

INTRODUCTION

There is an old story of a Chinese bamboo tree. After it is planted, the farmer waters it faithfully day after day, month after month, year after year. Yet for almost five years, nothing appears above the ground. Many would think the seed has failed. But beneath the soil, unseen roots are spreading deep and strong. Then suddenly, within a few weeks, the bamboo shoots up nearly ninety feet tall. The growth did not happen in those few weeks; it was happening silently all along.

Today's readings remind us that love too has seasons. Some seasons are filled with waiting, uncertainty, sacrifice, and prayer. Yet God wastes nothing. Ecclesiastes tells us: "There is a time for everything." And Jesus in the Gospel invites us not to worry about tomorrow, but to trust the Father who lovingly provides for every need.

As this couple stands before God today, they testify that divine providence has been quietly at work in their lives long before this wedding day arrived. Yet all of us know that we have not always trusted God's timing. At times we have become impatient, fearful, anxious, or self-reliant. Therefore, with humble hearts, let us ask the Lord for mercy and peace.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You guide every season of our lives with wisdom and love: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, You teach us to trust the Father and not be anxious about tomorrow: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You make all things beautiful in Your perfect time: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May Almighty God, who patiently leads us through every season of life, forgive us for our fear, impatience, and lack of trust; may He heal our hearts, strengthen our faith in His providence, and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

COLLECT

O God,
who in Your loving providence
guide the seasons of our lives
and make all things beautiful in their time,
look with kindness upon this bride and groom,
who today place their future into Your hands.
Teach them to trust You in days of joy and trial,
to seek first Your Kingdom, and to discover in every moment
the quiet unfolding of Your grace.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

HOMILY

A sailor once told the story of a terrible storm at sea. The waves crashed violently against the boat, and panic spread among the passengers. Yet in the middle of the chaos, a little girl sat quietly, almost peacefully. When the storm finally passed, someone asked her, “Weren’t you afraid?” She smiled and answered, “No. My father was steering the ship.”

That is the heart of today’s Gospel. Jesus says: “Do not worry about tomorrow.” Not because storms will never come, but because our Father is steering the ship.

Marriage begins beautifully, but it does not unfold in a straight line. There will be seasons. Ecclesiastes speaks honestly about them: a time to laugh and a time to weep, a time to embrace and a time to heal, a time to build and a time to begin again. Love is not proven only in bright days; love is proven when two people continue walking together through changing seasons without losing trust in God.

Many years ago, a sculptor was chiseling a huge block of marble. A child watching him asked, “How do you know what is inside the stone?” The sculptor replied, “I can already see the angel hidden there. I only remove what does not belong.”

That is also how God works in marriage. He sees not only who you are today, but who you can become together. Sometimes He uses joy; sometimes He uses waiting; sometimes He uses hardship. But every season becomes part of His shaping hands.

This couple did not arrive here by accident. There were conversations, decisions, delays, hopes, fears, prayers, perhaps even moments when the future was unclear. Yet divine providence was silently at work. Often, when we look back, we realize that God

was protecting us through closed doors as much as He was blessing us through open ones.

There is a touching story about an elderly couple married for over sixty years. Someone asked them the secret of their lasting love. The old woman answered gently: “We belonged to a generation that repaired things instead of throwing them away.”

What wisdom for our world today. Modern culture often teaches people to escape difficulty quickly. But Christian marriage believes that love can endure seasons because God remains faithful through every season.

And that faithfulness must begin with trust. Jesus points to the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. They do not control tomorrow, yet the Father cares for them. Worry shrinks the heart; trust enlarges it. Anxiety asks, “What if everything falls apart?” Faith asks, “What if God is already preparing grace for tomorrow?”

To the bride and groom: there will be moments when plans fail, when expectations change, when life moves differently than imagined. In those moments, remember this day. Remember that God brought you together not only for easy days, but to become companions in faith. Pray together especially when life becomes uncertain. Couples who pray together slowly learn to see time differently—not as pressure, but as providence.

A watchmaker once said, “The tiny gears inside a clock do not understand the whole design, yet every movement matters.” Much of life feels like that. We do not always understand why certain events happen when they do. But God sees the whole design.

And perhaps one day, many years from now, you will look back at moments that once confused or hurt you and say: “Now we understand. God was guiding us all along.”

So today is not merely the celebration of perfect love. It is the celebration of faithful trust. Trust that God goes before you. Trust that His timing is wiser than your own. Trust that even in silence, He is working.

And when storms eventually come—as they come to every marriage—remember the little girl on the stormy sea. The waves may rise. The winds may howl. But do not be afraid. Your Father is still steering the ship.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in the loving providence of God, who guides every season of our lives, let us bring before Him our prayers for the Church, the world, and this newly married couple.

1. For the Church, that she may continue to guide people to trust in God’s wisdom and timing even amid uncertainty and fear, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

2. For married couples everywhere, that they may remain faithful through every season of life and discover God’s grace in times both joyful and difficult, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

3. For this bride and groom, that their home may be filled with prayer, patience, tenderness, and unwavering trust in God’s providence, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

4. For those who are waiting—for healing, employment, reconciliation, companionship, or hope—that they may not lose

heart, but trust that God makes all things beautiful in His time, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For our departed loved ones, who trusted in God through the changing seasons of earthly life, that they may now rejoice forever in eternal peace, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Father of love and providence, hear the prayers we place before You today. Teach us to trust Your timing and walk faithfully in Your ways. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice, offered in gratitude for God’s faithful guidance and loving providence throughout every season of life, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give You thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in Your wisdom and providence
You guide the unfolding of human lives,
and in every age You reveal
that Your love never abandons those who trust in You.

Today You have brought together this bride and groom, teaching them that love is not built on fear of tomorrow but on confidence in Your abiding presence. In joy and sorrow, in abundance and uncertainty,

You remain the faithful companion of those
who place their future into Your hands.

In Christ Your Son,
You teach us to seek first Your Kingdom
and to trust that the Father knows our every need.
Through Him, married love becomes a sign of hope,
patience, and enduring faithfulness.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of Your glory, as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray with confidence to the Father
who lovingly provides for His children in every season of life.

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for this bride and groom,
who today begin their married life in Christ,
that God who has brought them together in His providence
may sustain them always by His grace.

Holy Father, creator of all things,
You fashioned man and woman in love
and revealed that their union is a sign of Your faithful covenant.

Look kindly upon these newlyweds,
who place their trust in You today.
Grant that they may walk together

through every season of life with steadfast faith,
patient love, and joyful hope.

When days are bright, may they thank You with grateful hearts.
When burdens come,
may they never lose courage or trust in Your providence.
Teach them to seek You first in all things,
and to discover Your presence
even in moments of uncertainty and waiting.

Bless their home with peace and generosity.
May they comfort one another in sorrow,
strengthen one another in weakness,
and rejoice together in the blessings You provide.

Grant also that they may be blessed with children,
and become loving and wise parents,
forming their family in faith, prayer, and compassion.

And after a long and fruitful life together,
may they come with all the saints
to the eternal wedding feast of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.
Teach us to trust Your providence in every uncertainty,
and to become instruments of peace within every season of life.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold Him who lovingly guides our lives
and calls us to trust in the Father's care through every season.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Love grows slowly, like roots hidden beneath the earth.
Much of God's work in marriage happens quietly—
in forgiveness, patience, daily sacrifice, shared prayer,
and enduring trust.

Today Christ has nourished this couple with His own life.
May they never forget that the God who brought them together
will continue walking beside them
through every changing season
until love reaches its fullness in eternity.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at the table of Your Son, we thank You, Lord,
for strengthening us with the sacrament of love and unity.
Remain close to this bride and groom
through every season that lies ahead.
When they rejoice, keep them grateful;
when they struggle, keep them faithful;
and in all things teach them to trust
that Your providence never fails.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord who, in His providence, brought you together today,
keep your hearts united in faithful love.

Amen.

May He grant you courage in difficult times, gratitude in joyful times,
and trust in every season of life.

Amen.

May your home be filled with peace, prayer, generosity, and the
blessing of children and lasting friendship.

Amen.

And may Almighty God bless you all,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by trusting His providence
and reflecting His faithful love in every season of life.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“God's timing is rarely early and never late.
Love becomes beautiful
when two hearts learn not merely to hold each other's hands,
but to trust the hands of God together.”

33. Marriage Beyond Romantic Feelings

1 Jn 4:7–12; Jn 15:12–13

Theme: “Love Is More Than a Feeling: Marriage as a Daily Gift of Self.”

INTRODUCTION

A man once visited his elderly wife in a nursing home every single morning at exactly 8:00 a.m. One day a nurse asked him, “Why are you so punctual? Your wife no longer remembers who you are.” The old man smiled gently and replied, “She may not know me anymore... but I still know who she is.”

That is the difference between romance and covenant. Feelings may rise and fall like tides, but true love chooses, remains, sacrifices, and gives itself even when emotions grow silent.

Today’s readings lead us into that deeper understanding of love. Saint John tells us that love comes from God because God Himself is love. And Jesus raises love to its highest form: “Love one another as I have loved you.” Marriage, then, is not merely about finding someone who makes life easier or happier; it is about becoming for one another a living sign of Christ’s faithful, self-giving love.

Yet we all know that our love is imperfect. At times we have loved selfishly, conditionally, or only when convenient. Therefore, before we celebrate this sacred covenant, let us ask the Lord to heal our hearts and teach us again how to love as He loves.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You loved us not only in words but by laying down Your life for us: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, You remain faithful even when human love grows weak and tired: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You call husbands and wives to reflect Your enduring and selfless love in the world: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God,
who teaches us that love is patient, faithful, and self-giving,
forgive us whenever we have failed to love as Christ loves,
heal what is wounded within us,
strengthen us in charity, and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

COLLECT

O God,
who revealed the fullness of love
through Your Son who laid down His life for us,
look with kindness upon Your servants
who today enter the covenant of Marriage.
Teach them to love not only in moments of joy,
but also in sacrifice, patience, forgiveness, and fidelity,
so that their home may become
a living witness of Your divine love in the world.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

HOMILY

There is a story about a violinist who played in a crowded subway station. Thousands of people hurried past him. Most never stopped. A few dropped coins without listening. Yet what they did not realize was this: the musician was one of the greatest violinists in the world, playing on an instrument worth millions.

The tragedy was not that the music lacked beauty. The tragedy was that people had become too rushed to recognize it.

Love can become like that in marriage.

In the beginning, love feels dramatic, exciting, emotional, almost effortless. But over time, dishes pile up, work exhausts, misunderstandings happen, children cry at midnight, routines become ordinary. And slowly, couples may begin to think love has disappeared simply because the feelings are no longer intense.

But today Jesus teaches something revolutionary: love is not measured first by emotion but by sacrifice.

“Love one another as I have loved you.”

And how did He love? By giving Himself.

Real marriage begins where romantic excitement alone cannot sustain the journey.

A young husband once complained to an elderly priest, “Father, I think I married the wrong person. We are not in love anymore.”

The priest quietly asked him, “Then what will you do?”

The man replied, “I suppose I must find love again.”

The priest smiled and said, “No. You must become love again.”

That is the Gospel.

Saint John does not say, “God has feelings.” He says, “God is love.” Love is an action, a decision, a way of living. The deepest moments in marriage are often hidden from the world: staying beside each other after painful arguments, forgiving after disappointment, remaining faithful during difficult years, caring for one another in sickness, choosing tenderness when tiredness could easily become anger.

The world often says, “I love you because you make me happy.” Christ says, “I love you even when it costs me.”

And strangely, that sacrificial love becomes the deepest joy.

There is another story of a woman caring for her husband suffering from Alzheimer’s disease. Every day he forgot her name. Every day he asked, “Who are you?”

And every day she answered, “I am the one who loves you.”

That is holy love.

That is Christ-like love.

That is marriage beyond feelings.

Dear couple, there will be days when emotions are strong and beautiful. Treasure them. But there may also be days when love feels dry, ordinary, or difficult. On those days remember this: feelings are a gift, but commitment is a vocation. Romance may begin a marriage, but sacrifice sustains it.

And when two people continue loving each other through changing seasons of life, something extraordinary happens: their love begins to resemble the Cross — and therefore it begins to resemble Christ.

Let me end with another story.

After sixty years of marriage, an old couple was asked the secret of their lasting union. The wife answered softly, "We were born in a time when if something broke, we repaired it — we did not throw it away."

That is the kind of love Jesus speaks about today.

A love that repairs.

A love that remains.

A love that chooses again and again.

A love stronger than moods, stronger than disappointments, stronger even than time itself.

And that kind of love is not merely human.

It is the very love of God living within a marriage.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

My dear brothers and sisters, trusting in the God who is love and who calls every Christian marriage to reflect His faithful and self-giving love, let us now present our prayers before Him.

1. For the Church, that she may continue to reveal to the world the faithful and sacrificial love of Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

2. For this newly married couple, that their love may deepen beyond emotions into a lasting covenant of patience, forgiveness, tenderness, and fidelity, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

3. For married couples who are struggling, wounded, or discouraged, that they may find healing, reconciliation, and renewed strength in God's grace, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

4. For families throughout the world, that homes may become places where love is lived generously and children are formed in faith,

compassion, and hope, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

5. For all who feel lonely, forgotten, or unloved, that through the witness of Christian families they may encounter the faithful love of God, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father,

You revealed Your love through Your Son who gave His life for us.

Hear the prayers we offer today

and make our lives reflections of Your enduring love.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice, offered in thanksgiving for the gift of faithful and self-giving love, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give You thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in Your wisdom You created man and woman in love and called them to become one heart and one flesh.

In Christ Your Son You revealed

that love reaches its fullness not in selfish desire but in generous self-giving.

For He loved us to the end and taught husbands and wives to mirror that same faithful love in their lives.

Through the covenant of Marriage You sanctify human affection, strengthen fidelity in times of trial, and make family life a sign of Your presence in the world.

And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of Your glory, as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray to the Father who teaches us to love
not only with words or feelings,
but with faithful and self-giving hearts.

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for this bride and groom,
who today begin their married life at the altar of Christ,
that He may bless them with unity of heart,
enduring love, and peace.

Holy Father,
Creator of all and source of true love,
pour out the grace of Your blessing upon these newlyweds.
Grant that they may remain faithful to one another
in moments of joy and in times of trial.
Teach them to love as Christ loves:
with patience, tenderness, sacrifice, and mercy.

May their home be filled with prayer and generosity.
May they comfort one another in sorrow,
encourage one another in weakness,
and rejoice together in the blessings You give.

Bless them with the gift of children,
that they may lovingly welcome new life
and raise their family in faith, wisdom, and compassion.

And after a lifetime of faithful love on earth,
may they come with all the saints
to the eternal wedding feast of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
You said to Your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you;
look not on our sins, but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with Your will.

Teach us especially to preserve peace within our homes
through patience, forgiveness, and selfless love,
so that every Christian family
may become a sign of Your presence in the world.
Who live and reign for ever and ever.

Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold Him who laid down His life for us
and teaches us to love as He has loved us.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Love becomes holy not when life is perfect,
but when hearts continue choosing one another despite imperfection.
In this Eucharist Christ gives Himself completely to us.
May this couple learn from Him
that lasting love is not sustained by feelings alone,
but by daily acts of sacrifice, forgiveness, fidelity, and grace.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at the table of Your Son, we pray, O Lord,
that this holy sacrament may strengthen this newly married couple
to love one another with steadfast and generous hearts.
May the grace they received today
help them remain faithful in every season of life
and become witnesses of Christ's enduring love in the world.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May He deepen your love beyond fleeting emotions
into a faithful and joyful covenant.

May He give you patience in trials,
forgiveness in moments of weakness,
and gratitude in times of blessing.

May your home become a place of peace,
where Christ is welcomed, where love is lived generously,
and where others encounter the goodness of God.
And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by loving faithfully,
forgiving generously,
and serving one another with joyful hearts.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“Feelings may begin love, but only self-giving love makes it last.”

34. Hope and Resurrection in Difficult Seasons

Rom 8:18–28; Jn 11:21–27

Theme: “Love That Waits for Resurrection”

Christian marriage is not built on the illusion that life will always be easy, but on the conviction that Christ enters every season of loss, fear, delay, and uncertainty, and brings forth new life. Like Martha standing before the tomb of Lazarus, husband and wife learn to say even in difficult seasons: “Yes, Lord, I believe.” Marriage becomes a living witness that hope is stronger than despair because Christ is the Resurrection and the Life.

INTRODUCTION

In the mountains of Japan there is an ancient art called *kintsugi*. When a bowl breaks, the artist does not hide the cracks. Instead, the broken pieces are joined together with gold. The fractures remain visible, but they become the most beautiful part of the vessel. What was broken is not discarded; it is transformed.

Christian marriage is not the joining of two perfect people who will never suffer. It is the union of two lives that trust Christ enough to believe that even wounds, disappointments, delays, and tears can become places where grace shines like gold. Saint Paul tells us today: “*All things work together for good for those who love God.*” And Martha hears Jesus say: “*I am the resurrection and the life.*”

As we gather around this altar, we recognize that at times we have doubted hope, resisted grace, or allowed fear to speak louder than faith. Therefore, with humble hearts, let us ask the Lord for mercy and healing as we begin these sacred mysteries.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you stand beside us in every season of sorrow and uncertainty, and you call us to trust in your promise of life:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you transform wounds into grace and despair into hope through the power of your resurrection: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you strengthen married love so that it may persevere faithfully through every trial and joy: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God,

who raises weary hearts with the hope of the Resurrection, forgive us our sins, heal what is wounded within us, strengthen us in faithful love, and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who reveal in Christ your Son that love is stronger than fear and life more powerful than death, look with kindness upon N. and N., who come before your altar to begin the covenant of marriage.

Grant that through every season of life they may remain steadfast in hope, patient in trials, joyful in grace, and faithful in love, so that their home may become a living sign of the Resurrection of Christ.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

HOMILY

A village in Italy once experienced a devastating earthquake. Houses collapsed, streets cracked open, and people spent days searching through rubble for survivors. One old man returned every morning to the ruins of his home. Someone finally asked him, “Why do you keep coming back? There is nothing left.” The old man answered quietly, “My wife’s voice lived here. Hope lived here. Love does not stop because walls fall.”

That is the Gospel today.

Martha stands before the tomb of her brother Lazarus. The house is full of grief. Expectations are shattered. Prayers seem unanswered. Jesus even appears late. Yet into that place of disappointment Christ speaks one of the greatest sentences ever spoken:

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

Notice: Jesus does not merely say, “I can give resurrection.” He says, *“I AM the resurrection.”* Hope is not an idea. Hope is a Person standing before her.

Every marriage eventually encounters a tomb. Not necessarily physical death, but seasons where something feels buried: dreams, certainty, health, finances, trust, energy, romance, or plans for the future. Every couple will someday stand where Martha stood — asking quietly, “Lord, where are you in this?”

And yet Christian marriage is different because it does not place its hope merely in emotions or circumstances. It places hope in Christ.

There is a story of a fisherman from the Philippines whose boat was destroyed in a typhoon. For months he struggled to rebuild his life. One evening his wife placed a single candle on the table during

dinner because electricity had failed again. She smiled and said, “We still have enough light to see each other.” Years later he said that was the moment he realized their marriage was stronger than the storm. Sometimes resurrection begins with a tiny flame refusing to go out.

Saint Paul says today:

“The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory to be revealed.”

Paul is not denying suffering. Christianity never pretends pain is unreal. Even Jesus wept at Lazarus’ tomb. But faith insists that suffering never gets the final word.

Marriage becomes holy precisely when two people learn not only how to celebrate together, but how to hope together.

A nurse once spoke about elderly couples in hospice care. She said the most moving moments were not dramatic speeches but simple gestures — an old husband adjusting his wife’s blanket, a wife moistening her husband’s lips with water, tired hands still reaching for each other after fifty years. “At that moment,” she said, “love looked eternal.” That is resurrection already beginning on earth.

N. and N., today you are not promising each other a life without winters. You are promising never to face winter alone. You are promising that when one grows tired, the other will carry hope. When one struggles to pray, the other will believe. When one feels buried beneath fear or disappointment, the other will stand nearby like Martha and say: “Christ is still here.”

The world often defines love by intensity of feeling. The Gospel defines love by faithful presence.

And that faithful presence mirrors Christ himself. Jesus did not flee from the tomb. He entered grief. He stood among tears. He called life out of darkness. In the same way, your marriage is meant to become a place where each of you helps the other rise again and again.

There is an old story from the Second World War about a cathedral in Germany that was destroyed by bombs. After the war, people rebuilt it stone by stone. They restored the statues and stained glass — except for one statue of Christ whose hands had been shattered beyond repair. Instead of replacing the hands, the people placed beneath it a sign that read: “**Christ has no hands now on earth but ours.**” That is Christian marriage.

Your hands will become Christ’s hands — lifting each other when weary, forgiving after failures, blessing children, serving the poor, comforting in grief, and holding on when life becomes difficult.

And one day, many years from now, when your hair has turned grey and your steps have slowed, may people look at your marriage and say: “There lived two people who believed that love could survive every season because Christ was alive among them.”

For in the end, the greatest miracle in marriage is not that two people avoid suffering. The greatest miracle is that through Christ they continue loving until suffering itself becomes transformed into glory.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in Christ, who is the Resurrection and the Life, let us place before him our prayers for the Church, the world, and this newly married couple.

1. For the Church: that she may bring hope to all who suffer and reveal Christ’s living presence in a wounded world, let us pray to the

Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

2. For N. and N.: that their marriage may remain steadfast through every season of life, and that their love may always reflect the hope of the Resurrection, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

3. For married couples who are burdened by illness, disappointment, conflict, or grief: that they may find healing, strength, and renewed trust in Christ, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

4. For families throughout the world: that homes may become places of forgiveness, tenderness, prayer, and faithful love, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For all who feel hopeless or alone, especially the sick, the grieving, and the forgotten: that Christ may call them from darkness into new life, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Father of mercy and God of hope,

hear the prayers we place before you today.

Strengthen us with the promise of the Resurrection,

and keep us faithful in love through every season of life.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice, offered in hope and thanksgiving for the love of N. and N., and for the grace to remain faithful through every season of life, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in your wisdom and love
you have revealed that faithful love
is a sign of the covenant between Christ and his Church.
In marriage you call man and woman
to walk together through joy and sorrow,
through abundance and uncertainty,
trusting always in the victory of Christ over sin and death.

In him despair is transformed into hope,
wounds become places of grace,
and every human darkness is touched
by the light of the Resurrection.

Through him N. and N. begin today their journey of married life,
confident that your presence will sustain them
through every season and trial.

And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray with confidence to the Father
who sustains us in every season and never abandons his children:

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters, let us humbly pray to the Lord
for these newly married spouses, N. and N.,
that he who has brought them together today
may sustain them always in faithful love.

Holy Father, creator of heaven and earth,
you made man and woman in your image
and blessed their union with the gift of love.

Pour out your grace upon N. and N.,
that they may remain united in heart and spirit
through every joy and every trial.

When life is bright, let them be grateful;
when life is difficult, let them never lose hope.
May they recognize Christ beside them
in every season of their marriage.

Grant that their home may be filled
with patience, kindness, forgiveness, and peace.
May they comfort one another in sorrow,
strengthen one another in weakness,
and rejoice together in the blessings you provide.

Bless them with the gift of children,
that they may lovingly welcome new life,
raise their children in faith and wisdom,
and become a family rooted in prayer and compassion.

And after a long and fruitful life together,
may they come with all the saints
to the eternal wedding feast of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
who said to your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.
In every season of struggle or uncertainty,
keep our hearts anchored in the hope of your Resurrection,
so that no darkness may overcome the light of your presence.
Who live and reign for ever and ever.

Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who brings hope to every wounded heart
and calls us from darkness into life.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Love becomes holy not because life is easy,
but because Christ remains present within it.
Today N. and N. have received not only each other,
but also the Lord who promises to walk with them
through every season.
The same Christ who stood before the tomb of Lazarus
now stands within their marriage, quietly saying again:
“I am the resurrection and the life.”
Where he remains, hope never dies.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at this holy table
in the Bread of Life and the Chalice of Salvation,
we ask you, O Lord,
to strengthen N. and N. in unity and faithful love.

May the grace of this sacrament
sustain them through every season of life,
renew their hope in times of trial,
and deepen their trust in your abiding presence.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the eternal Father
keep you united in faithful love
and fill your home with peace and hope. **Amen.**

May Christ the Lord,
who revealed himself as the Resurrection and the Life,
strengthen you in every trial
and lead you always into deeper joy. **Amen.**

May the Holy Spirit
make your hearts steadfast in compassion,
rich in forgiveness,
and radiant with enduring love. **Amen.**

And may almighty God bless all of you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your lives, and may your love become a living witness that hope in Christ is stronger than every darkness.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

A strong marriage is not one that never faces storms, but one that keeps discovering, again and again, that Christ still stands beside the tombs of life saying: “Rise.”

35. Chastity and Purity in Christian Love

1 Thess 4:1–8; Mt 5:8

Theme: “Blessed Are the Pure in Heart: Love That Protects the Sacred”

INTRODUCTION

In the mountains of northern Italy there is an old custom among glassmakers. Before a crystal chalice is shaped, the furnace must first burn away every impurity hidden in the sand. If even a small fragment remains, the chalice may sparkle outwardly, yet under pressure it will crack. Purity is not decoration; it is strength born of fire. So too with love. The world often treats love as excitement, possession, or passing attraction, but Christian love is something sacred — a love refined by truth, reverence, sacrifice, and self-control.

Today, through the words of Saint Paul and the Beatitude of Jesus, we hear a difficult but beautiful call: “This is the will of God — your holiness.” Chastity is not the rejection of love; it is the protection of love. Purity of heart means learning to see another person not as an object to be used, but as a mystery to be cherished. The pure in heart can truly see God because they have learned to love as God loves.

Yet all of us know how often our hearts become clouded by selfishness, impatience, hidden wounds, and desires that do not lead to life. As this couple prepares to give themselves to one another in the holiness of marriage, let us first ask the Lord to purify our hearts and make us worthy to celebrate these sacred mysteries.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You call us to love with reverence and holiness:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You teach us that the pure in heart shall see God:

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You sanctify human love through Your faithful and self-giving love: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God cleanse the hidden corners of our hearts,
heal every wound that weakens love,
purify us from selfishness and sin,
and make us worthy to reflect His faithful and holy love in our lives,
and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

COLLECT

O God,
who created human love
to become a sign of Your own faithful covenant,
look with kindness upon Your servants gathered here today.
Purify their hearts, deepen their reverence for one another,
and teach them to walk always
in holiness, tenderness, and truth,
so that their marriage may radiate
the beauty of Christ's love for His Church.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

HOMILY

A monk once asked his students to hold a clear bowl of water and walk through the village without spilling a drop. People shouted at them, mocked them, distracted them, but one young student returned with the bowl still full. "How did you manage it?" the monk asked. The student replied, "I was too aware of the treasure in my hands to lose myself in the noise around me."

That is purity of heart.

Purity is not about fear of the world; it is about awareness of the treasure God has entrusted to us. Today's world speaks endlessly about desire, attraction, chemistry, and pleasure. Yet Jesus speaks about the heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The heart determines how we see people. A selfish heart uses; a pure heart reveres. A selfish heart asks, "What can I take?" A pure heart asks, "How can I protect, honour, and give myself?"

Saint Paul tells us clearly in the First Letter to the Thessalonians: "This is the will of God — your holiness." Holiness is not reserved for monasteries and saints in stained-glass windows. Holiness is meant for kitchens, bedrooms, family tables, arguments, tears, forgiveness, and ordinary married life. Christian marriage is not merely two people living together; it is two souls helping each other become holy.

There is a story of an elderly couple married for more than sixty years. One day the wife suffered memory loss and could no longer recognize her husband. Yet every morning he entered her room, combed her hair gently, and sat beside her feeding her breakfast. A nurse finally asked him, "Why do you keep coming when she no longer knows who you are?" The old man smiled and answered, "Because I still know who she is."

That is pure love.

Purity in marriage is not simply about bodily chastity before marriage, though that matters deeply. Purity is the lifelong discipline of protecting the dignity of the other person. It means speaking truthfully when lying would be easier. It means fidelity when temptation appears. It means tenderness when anger would feel more satisfying. It means guarding one another's vulnerabilities with reverence.

The pure in heart are capable of seeing God because they learn to recognize God hidden in another person. Every spouse eventually discovers that marriage is not sustained by romance alone. Beauty changes. Feelings fluctuate. Life becomes difficult. There will be seasons of misunderstanding, financial strain, sickness, exhaustion, and disappointment. In those moments, purity of heart becomes the strength that keeps love from collapsing into selfishness.

There is another story from wartime Europe. A young woman carried a small candle through dark underground tunnels where refugees were hiding. Someone asked her, "Why protect such a tiny flame in all this darkness?" She answered, "Because if this light dies, people will lose hope." Marriage is exactly that. In a world darkened by betrayal, casual relationships, and wounded trust, faithful Christian marriage becomes a candle that tells the world: holy love is still possible.

Dear couple, never allow the noise of the world to convince you that holiness weakens love. Holiness deepens love. Chastity is not the enemy of passion; it is what keeps passion from becoming destructive. Purity teaches you to belong to one another without possessing one another. It teaches you to love freely, faithfully, fruitfully, and forever.

And one day, after many years, after struggles and reconciliations, after laughter and tears, after carrying each other through weakness and age, may people look at your marriage and see not merely two successful individuals, but a living reflection of Christ Himself.

A few years ago, after a devastating fire destroyed a family home, firefighters discovered something extraordinary in the ashes: a wedding crucifix hanging untouched above the burned remains. Everything else had fallen apart, but the cross remained standing. The couple later said, "That crucifix reminded us that if Christ remains at the centre, love survives every fire."

That is the promise of today.
Not a love protected from suffering,
but a love purified through it.
And blessed indeed are the pure in heart,
for even in the struggles of marriage,
they shall see God.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in God who calls every human love to holiness and purity of heart, let us place before Him our prayers for this couple and for the whole Church.

1. For the Church throughout the world, that she may courageously proclaim the beauty of faithful, holy, and life-giving love in a confused world, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
2. For N. and N., that their marriage may always be rooted in reverence, tenderness, fidelity, and purity of heart, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

3. For young people discerning love and marriage, that they may learn to value chastity not as restriction but as the protection of authentic love, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

4. For couples struggling through trials, misunderstandings, or wounded trust, that Christ may heal and strengthen them, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For all gathered here, that our hearts may become more pure, sincere, and capable of seeing God in one another, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father,
You are the source of every faithful love.
Hear the prayers we offer today
and keep us always in the light of Your holiness.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice,
offered with hearts seeking holiness and faithful love,
may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give You thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in Your wisdom You created man and woman in love
and called them to reflect the purity
and fidelity of Your own divine life.
In Christ Your Son,

You reveal that blessed are the pure in heart,
for they shall see You not only in heaven
but already in lives shaped by holiness and self-giving love.

Today You unite these servants in the covenant of marriage,
teaching them to protect the sacred gift entrusted to them,
to honour one another with reverence,
and to become a living sign of Christ's faithful love for His Church.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of Your glory, as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray to the Father who purifies our hearts
and teaches us to love as His children.

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for these newly married spouses,
that He who has brought them together today
may make their love holy and fruitful.

Holy Father, creator of the whole world,
who fashioned man and woman in Your image
and willed that their union be crowned with Your blessing,
look with kindness upon these Your servants.

Pour out the grace of the Holy Spirit upon them,
that with pure hearts and faithful love
they may honour and cherish one another all the days of their life.

May they protect the sacredness of their marriage
with tenderness, patience, forgiveness, and joy.

In moments of trial, strengthen them.

In moments of happiness, keep them grateful.

May they always seek one another's good
and never allow selfishness to darken the love
You have planted in them.

Bless them with the gift of children,
that they may lovingly welcome new life
and raise their family in faith, wisdom, and holiness.

Grant that their home may become a place of peace,
prayer, and compassion,
where Christ is always welcomed and the poor are never forgotten.

And after a long and blessed life together,
may they come with all the saints
to the eternal wedding feast of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,

You said to Your Apostles:

Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.

Look not on our sins, but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with Your
will.

Teach us to guard one another's dignity with pure hearts and faithful
love, so that our relationships may become signs of Your holiness in
the world.

Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,

behold Him who purifies our hearts

and teaches us the holiness of faithful love.

Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Love becomes holy not in grand moments alone,
but in daily fidelity. A pure heart is formed slowly —

in patience during misunderstandings,

in forgiveness after wounds,

in tenderness when life becomes difficult,

and in choosing one another again and again.

Today Christ has nourished this couple with His own life,
so that their marriage may become not merely a human promise,
but a living witness to divine love.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at this holy table,

we ask You, Lord,

to strengthen this newly married couple

with the grace of sincere and faithful love.

Purify their hearts continually,

keep them steadfast in holiness,

and make their home a sign of Christ's enduring presence in the
world.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless your hearts with purity,
your words with tenderness,
and your home with peace.

Amen.

May He strengthen you in times of trial,
keep you faithful in love,
and fill your family with joy and holiness.

Amen.

And may almighty God bless you all,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by lives of faithful, holy, and self-giving love.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

Purity of heart is not the absence of love's fire;
it is the wisdom that keeps the fire burning
without destroying what is sacred.

36. Listening with the Heart

James 1:19–21; Lk 24:13–35

Theme: “Love Listens Before It Speaks.”

A Christian marriage flourishes when husband and wife learn to listen not only to each other's words, but also to each other's hearts — just as the disciples on the road to Emmaus listened to Christ until their hearts began to burn within them.

INTRODUCTION

A violin maker once displayed two instruments side by side. One was expensive, polished, and visually perfect. The other looked ordinary, almost neglected. Yet when the master played them, the ordinary violin produced the richer music. Surprised, someone asked why. The violin maker replied, “Because this one has learned to listen to the hands that hold it.”

Every lasting relationship discovers this truth: love is not built first by speaking brilliantly, but by listening deeply.

Today's readings speak about that sacred listening. Saint James tells us to be “quick to hear, slow to speak.” In the Gospel, the risen Jesus walks beside two disappointed disciples and listens to their pain before opening their eyes. Love matures when hearts feel heard. Marriage becomes holy when two people continue listening even after the excitement of the wedding day fades.

Yet we know that too often we interrupt, misunderstand, wound with words, or fail to hear the silent cries of those we love. Therefore, as we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask the Lord for mercy and for hearts that truly listen.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus,
You walk beside us even when we fail to recognize Your presence:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus,
You listen patiently to the fears and wounds hidden in our hearts:

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus,
You set our hearts on fire through Your word and Your love:

Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God,
who never ceases to listen to the prayers of His children,
forgive us for every careless word, every hardened heart,
and every failure to love with patience and understanding;
may He heal what is wounded within us, strengthen us in charity,
and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT

O God, who revealed Your Son to the disciples
through the breaking of the bread
and through the patient listening of love,
grant that these your servants, united today in holy matrimony,
may always hear one another with understanding,
walk together through every joy and trial,
and discover Your presence at the centre of their home.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,
who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

HOMILY

A nurse once cared for an elderly man whose wife no longer remembered him because of advanced dementia. Every morning he came to feed her breakfast. One day the nurse asked, “Why do you still come every day when she doesn’t even know who you are?” The old man smiled gently and replied, “She may not know who I am — but I still know who she is.”

That is love.
Not merely being understood, but choosing to understand.
Not merely being heard, but remaining present enough to listen.

Today’s readings reveal that one of the deepest forms of love is listening with the heart.

Saint James gives simple advice that could save many marriages: “Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.” Most relationships are not destroyed in one dramatic moment. Often they slowly weaken through unheard feelings, rushed conversations, distracted attention, and words spoken without tenderness.

In the Gospel, the disciples on the road to Emmaus are disappointed and heartbroken. Notice what Jesus does first. He does not immediately preach. He does not correct them instantly. He walks beside them. He asks questions. He listens to their sorrow. Only after listening does He begin to open the Scriptures to them.

Many couples think love survives through grand gestures. But marriages often survive through small acts of listening.

A husband comes home tired and says, “I’m fine,” while his silence says otherwise.

A wife says, “Nothing is wrong,” while her eyes quietly ask for

comfort.

Love listens beneath the words.

There is an old story about a monk who visited a village where a couple had been married for over sixty years. The monk asked them, “What is the secret of your long marriage?”

The wife answered, “In our time, when something broke, we repaired it. We did not throw it away.”

Then she smiled and added, “And repairing requires listening.”

That is profoundly Christian.

Jesus Himself repairs broken hearts by listening first.

Dear couple, today you promise more than romance. You promise attention. Presence. Patience. The world teaches people to react quickly, defend quickly, and move on quickly. But Christian love moves differently. It pauses. It listens. It stays.

And there will be Emmaus moments in your marriage — days of confusion, disappointment, financial stress, misunderstandings, tears, exhaustion, perhaps even silence. On such days, remember this Gospel. Christ will still be walking beside you, even when you do not recognize Him.

Sometimes the holiest sentence in marriage is not “I have the answer,” but simply:
“Tell me what is in your heart.”

A priest once spoke about visiting a dying woman in hospital. Her husband sat beside her bed holding her hand in silence. The priest asked, “What have you been saying to each other?”
The old man replied, “Nothing much. After fifty years, words are no longer necessary. We are simply listening together.”

That is where love matures — when hearts become a home for one another.

And perhaps that is why the disciples finally recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread. Their hearts had already begun burning while He listened and spoke with them along the road.

Today Christ walks into this marriage.

He will remain in your conversations, your silences, your meals, your struggles, your laughter, your forgiveness, and your prayers.

If you keep listening — truly listening — not only to each other but also to Christ, your hearts too will burn with a love that the years cannot extinguish.

And remember the old husband in the nursing home:
“She may not know who I am — but I still know who she is.”

That is the kind of love God has for us.

And that is the kind of love to which Christian marriage is called.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered around Christ who walks beside His people and listens to every prayer of the heart, let us now place our petitions before Him.

1. For the Church, that she may listen with compassion to the joys and wounds of humanity and reveal the patient love of Christ to the world, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

2. For this newly married couple, that they may always speak with kindness, listen with patience, forgive generously, and recognize Christ walking beside them each day, let us pray to the Lord.
Lord, hear our prayer.

3. For married couples experiencing misunderstanding, loneliness, or trials, that the Lord may heal wounded hearts and restore communication and peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

4. For families and communities, that homes may become places where every person feels heard, valued, and loved, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For our departed loved ones, that they may now hear the eternal voice of the Good Shepherd calling them into everlasting joy, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father,

You know the unspoken hopes within every heart.

Receive these prayers with mercy

and grant them according to Your will.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice, offered in gratitude for the love that listens, heals, and remains faithful through every season of life, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give You thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in Your wisdom You created man and woman in love and taught them that true communion is born when hearts learn to listen with patience and humility.

In Your Son Jesus Christ,

You walked beside the discouraged disciples, heard their fears, opened the Scriptures to them, and revealed Yourself in the breaking of the bread.

Through Him You bless this marriage today, calling these servants to become for one another companions on the journey of life, comfort in sorrow, joy in trial, and faithful witnesses of Your enduring love.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,

with Thrones and Dominions,

and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,

we sing the hymn of Your glory,

as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

United as God's family, and trusting in the Father who always listens to the prayers of His children, let us now pray with confidence in the words our Savior gave us:

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,

let us humbly pray to the Lord for this bride and groom,

who come today to begin their life together in Christ.

Holy Father,

creator of love and source of all communion,

pour out the grace of Your blessing upon these newly married spouses.

Grant that they may always listen to one another with patience,

speak with wisdom and tenderness,
and walk side by side through every joy and difficulty.

May their home be filled with peace, laughter, prayer, and understanding.

When misunderstandings arise, give them humility to seek forgiveness;

when burdens grow heavy, teach them to carry them together;
and when happiness fills their days, keep their hearts grateful.

Bless them with the gift of children,
that they may lovingly welcome new life
and raise their family in faith, hope, and charity.

May Christ always remain close to them,
walking beside them as He walked with the disciples to Emmaus,
until the day they come together to the eternal wedding feast of heaven.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
who said to Your Apostles:

Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins, but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with Your will.

Teach us also to listen with compassionate hearts,
so that our homes and relationships may become places of reconciliation and understanding.

Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold Him who walks beside us and nourishes us with His love.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

The disciples recognized Jesus only after walking with Him, listening to Him, and sitting at table with Him. Marriage is much the same. Love deepens slowly through daily companionship, patient listening, shared burdens, and shared bread. Christ has entered this union today. May this couple never stop discovering His presence in one another.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at the table of Your Son,
we ask You, Lord,
to strengthen this newly married couple
with the grace of attentive love and enduring fidelity.
May the Eucharist they have received today
teach them to recognize Christ in one another,
to listen with compassionate hearts,
and to walk together in holiness all the days of their life.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May He make your hearts attentive
to one another's joys and sorrows.
May He grant you patience in difficulty,
gratitude in happiness, and faithfulness in love.
May Christ walk beside you every day of your marriage
and make your home a place of peace and understanding.
And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by listening with love, serving with
humility, and walking together with Christ on the journey of life.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

"The deepest words in marriage are often not spoken but heard."

37. The Language of Blessing and Encouragement

Eph 4:29–32; Lk 6:43–45

Theme: "A Home Built by Words that Bless"

Christian marriage flourishes when husband and wife become for one another a source of blessing, encouragement, forgiveness, and life-giving speech. From the goodness stored in the heart, words can either wound deeply or heal beautifully. Today Christ calls this couple to build a marriage where every word becomes a seed of grace.

INTRODUCTION

There is an old story of a carpenter who was asked why one particular house he built remained strong after storms that destroyed many others. He replied, "Because every beam in that house carries the weight of another." A marriage is built in much the same way. Not only through grand gestures, but through ordinary words spoken every day: "Thank you." "Forgive me." "I am proud of you." "I am here." Loving words quietly carry the weight of another soul.

In today's readings, Saint Paul urges us: "Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up." And Jesus reminds us that words reveal the heart itself: "From the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks." Marriage therefore becomes more than living under one roof; it becomes learning to speak life into each other's hearts.

Yet we know that our words are not always kind, patient, or healing. Sometimes we have spoken in anger, silence, sarcasm, or indifference. Therefore, as we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask the Lord to cleanse our hearts, so that our words may become instruments of blessing and peace.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus,
you speak words that heal the broken-hearted and restore the weary:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus,
you call us to forgive one another with tenderness and compassion:

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus,
you teach us that loving hearts bear good fruit through loving words:

Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God cleanse our hearts of bitterness, anger,
and hurtful speech,
strengthen us to speak words that encourage and heal,
forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT

O God,
who teach us that a good heart bears good fruit
and that words spoken in love can strengthen and heal,
pour out your grace upon N. and N.,
that their marriage may become a dwelling of kindness,
forgiveness, and peace.
May their words encourage one another
in moments of joy and trial alike,
and may their home reflect the tenderness of Christ himself.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

HOMILY

A traveller once entered a monastery during a terrible winter storm. He noticed that although the monks owned very little, there was an extraordinary warmth in that place. Before leaving, he asked the old abbot, “What keeps this monastery alive in such harsh winters?” The abbot smiled and answered, “Every morning before work begins, each monk blesses another monk with a sincere word. That warmth survives longer than fire.”

That is the kind of warmth Saint Paul speaks about today. “Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up.” Marriage survives not because two people never struggle, but because even in struggle they refuse to stop blessing one another.

Many couples imagine that love dies because of dramatic betrayals. Often it dies much more quietly — through neglected words, constant criticism, impatient tones, and long silences. A marriage can starve emotionally while sitting at the same table every evening.

Jesus says in today’s Gospel: “A good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good.” Words are not accidental. They come from somewhere deep inside us. Harsh words usually grow from hidden resentment; gentle words grow from a heart that has learned gratitude.

There is a Jewish proverb that says: “Words are like arrows. Once released, you cannot call them back.” How many people still carry wounds from words spoken years ago by someone they loved? Yet the opposite is also true. A single encouraging word can remain alive in a person for decades.

A teacher once asked her students to write one positive thing about every classmate. Years later, after one former student died in military

service, his parents found that crumpled list folded carefully in his wallet. He had carried those encouraging words every day of his life. Human beings survive on blessing more than we realize.

N. and N., today you stand before God promising lifelong love. But your marriage will not only be shaped by anniversaries, vacations, or celebrations. It will be shaped by ordinary Tuesday conversations. By how you speak when tired. By how you disagree. By whether your words become a refuge or a battlefield.

When one of you fails — and every human being eventually does — remember this: criticism changes very little, but encouragement changes people. Saint Paul says: “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.” Forgiveness is one of the most beautiful languages in marriage. There is another story of an elderly couple married for sixty years. Someone asked the husband, “What is the secret of your long marriage?” He answered, “I always tried to speak to her in a way that I would not regret if it were my last sentence to her.” That is wisdom. None of us knows how many words we still have left to give.

And so, dear friends, may this marriage become a home where blessings are spoken freely; where apologies are sincere; where gratitude is never rare; where children, family, and guests feel strengthened simply by entering that house.

For at the end of life, people rarely remember our achievements or possessions. They remember how our words made them feel: whether we diminished them or lifted them closer to God.

A nurse who cared for the dying once wrote that many people near death repeated the same regret: “I wish I had spoken more love while I still had time.” But Christian marriage offers another possibility — to spend a lifetime speaking life before time runs out.

May N. and N. become for each other that daily blessing which survives longer than fire.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Celebrating God’s gift of love and the power of words that heal and encourage, let us now bring our prayers before the Lord.

1. For the Church, that she may always speak words of truth, mercy, and hope to a wounded world, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

2. For N. and N., that their marriage may be filled with kindness, patience, forgiveness, and words that strengthen one another each day, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

3. For families burdened by conflict, silence, or hurtful speech, that Christ may restore understanding and peace within their homes, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

4. For children everywhere, that they may grow up hearing words of encouragement, affirmation, and love, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For all gathered here, that our hearts may become rich in compassion so that our words may bear good fruit, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Father of mercy and love,
you know the power words have to wound or to heal.
Hear the prayers we place before you today,
and make our hearts more like the heart of your Son,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that these gifts,
and the offering of this couple's lives
expressed through words of love, fidelity, and forgiveness,
may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in your wisdom you created man and woman in love,
calling them to become one heart and one life.
You teach us through your Son
that what fills the heart is revealed through the words we speak.
And so you invite Christian spouses
to encourage one another with tenderness,
to forgive one another in weakness,
and to build their home through words that give life.

In N. and N. you reveal again today
the beauty of faithful love and mutual blessing.
May their marriage become a sign of Christ's gentle love for his
Church,
a place where peace is spoken, mercy is practiced,
and faith is handed on with joy.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
and with all the saints,
we proclaim your glory,
as with one voice we sing:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray in the words that unite every Christian home in love,
forgiveness, and peace:

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for N. and N.,
who today begin their married life at this altar,
that God may bless them with unity of heart and graciousness of
speech.

Holy Father, creator of love and source of every blessing,
look with kindness upon N. and N.
who have joined their lives in the covenant of marriage.
Pour into their hearts the grace of the Holy Spirit,
that their words may always reflect patience, tenderness, and truth.
When trials arise, grant them wisdom to speak gently;
when joy fills their home, teach them gratitude and praise;
and when one grows weary, may the other become a voice of
encouragement and peace.

May they never wound one another through bitterness or contempt,
but daily strengthen each other through kindness and forgiveness.
Let their home become a place where family and friends encounter
welcome, hope, and joy.
Bless them with children, that they may lovingly nurture them in faith
and teach them by word and example the beauty of Christian love.

And after a lifetime of mutual support and faithful love,
bring them at last to the eternal wedding feast of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you;
look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.
May our words become instruments of reconciliation and hope, and
may every Christian home grow in kindness and mutual respect.
Who live and reign for ever and ever.
Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.
Through this holy banquet, Christ strengthens us to love with
sincerity and to speak with hearts filled with grace.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

The deepest hunger of the human heart is not only to be loved,
but also to hear love spoken.
In the Eucharist, Christ speaks once more his eternal word to us:
“I am with you.”
May N. and N. carry that same assurance
into their marriage every day —
becoming for one another a voice of comfort,
courage, forgiveness, and joy.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at this holy table, we pray, O Lord,
that N. and N. may be strengthened by the Body and Blood of Christ
to live their marriage in lasting fidelity and peace.
May the words they speak be rooted
in hearts transformed by your grace,
so that their home may always bear the good fruit of love and
encouragement.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May he fill your hearts with patience and kindness.
May he teach you to speak words that heal rather than wound,
to forgive quickly, and to encourage generously.
May your home become a dwelling of peace,
where faith is lived joyfully and love is spoken daily.
And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord
by the goodness of your hearts and by words
that bring life to one another.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“A strong marriage is built not only by loving hearts,
but by loving words spoken consistently.”

38. Raising Children in Faith and Love

Deut 6:4–9; Mt 19:13–15

Theme: “Building a Home Where Faith Is Remembered, Lived, and Passed On.”

INTRODUCTION

There is a story told of an old grandfather who every evening lit a small candle before supper. One day his grandson asked, “Why do you light it when we already have electricity?” The grandfather smiled and replied, “Because this light reminds me that our family would become dark long before the power fails if we ever forget God.” Years later, after the grandfather had died, the grandson—now a father himself—continued the same practice with his own children. They remembered very few of the old man’s words, but they never forgot the light.

Today, dear friends, marriage is not only the union of two hearts; it is the beginning of a sanctuary where faith can be remembered and handed on. In the Book of Deuteronomy, God tells His people: “*Teach these words diligently to your children.*” And in the Gospel, Jesus opens His arms to children and says, “*Let the little children come to me.*” A Christian marriage is therefore more than companionship—it becomes a living school of love, prayer, forgiveness, and faith.

Yet we also know how often our homes fall short of God’s dream. Sometimes we forget to pray together, fail to speak kindly, or become too busy to place God at the centre of family life. Therefore, with humble hearts, let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord for mercy and grace.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You call husbands and wives to build their home upon the rock of Your word: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, You welcomed little children and blessed them with tenderness and love: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You remain present in every family that prays, forgives, and loves in Your name: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May Almighty God, who calls us to build our homes in faith, renew in us the grace to love generously, forgive sincerely, and hand on His light to future generations; forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

COLLECT

O God,
who have called these your servants
to the covenant of Christian Marriage,
grant that their home may become
a dwelling place of faith, tenderness, and peace.
May they keep Your word alive in their hearts,
teach it faithfully to their children,
and reflect in their family
the welcoming love of Christ for all people.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

HOMILY

A teacher once asked a classroom of children, “What is the strongest wall in a house?” One child answered, “Brick walls.” Another said, “Concrete.” But one little girl quietly replied, “The strongest wall is love, because if there is no love, the whole house falls apart.” The teacher later said that in all his years, he had never heard a truer answer.

Today, dear couple, Jesus is not merely blessing your wedding day; He is blessing the home you will build together. And the readings today tell us what makes that home strong: faith remembered, love practiced, and God placed at the center.

In Deuteronomy, Moses speaks passionately to the people: “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.*” But he does not stop there. He continues: “*Teach these things diligently to your children.*” Faith was never meant to remain locked inside a church building. It was meant to echo around dining tables, travel in family conversations, be whispered in bedtime prayers, and be seen in acts of forgiveness.

A child learns faith less from sermons and more from watching. Children notice whether parents pray when life becomes difficult. They notice whether forgiveness is practiced after arguments. They notice whether kindness survives stress.

There is a moving story of a little boy who woke up one night frightened by thunder. He ran into his parents’ room and said, “Mom, I’m scared.” His mother replied, “Jesus is with you.” The boy answered, “I know Jesus is with me, but right now I need someone with skin on.” That is exactly the vocation of Christian parents—to become visible signs of the invisible love of God.

The Gospel today is deeply beautiful. People bring children to Jesus, and the disciples try to stop them. But Jesus says, “*Let the little children come to me.*” In every Christian family, children should never feel pushed away from God; they should feel carried toward Him.

And this begins long before children arrive. The way you love each other today will one day become the emotional and spiritual language of your future children. If they grow up hearing respect, they learn dignity. If they grow up seeing forgiveness, they learn mercy. If they grow up seeing prayer, they learn trust in God.

There is another story about an elderly woman whose son had drifted far from faith. Someone once asked her, “Why do you still keep praying for him after all these years?” She replied, “Because when he was little, I placed him in God’s hands, and God never forgets what a mother entrusts to Him.” Years later, that son returned to the Church. Seeds planted in faith often bloom slowly—but they bloom.

Dear couple, your greatest success in life may not be wealth, status, or achievements. Your greatest success may one day be hearing your child pray sincerely, forgive freely, or love generously because they first learned it from you.

But remember: no family becomes holy automatically. Homes become holy through daily choices—through patience when tired, prayer when busy, gentleness when hurt, and love when sacrifice is costly.

A father once carved these words above the entrance of his home: “In this house, we begin again every day.” That is Christian family life. Not perfection, but grace. Not a flawless home, but a faithful one.

And perhaps years from now, when your children remember this house you are beginning today, they may not remember every gift you bought or every success you achieved. But they will remember whether God lived there. They will remember whether love lived there.

And that will become the strongest wall your home will ever have.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Dear brothers and sisters,
God has called this couple to build a home rooted in faith and love. Trusting in His goodness, let us now present our prayers before Him.

1. For the Church:

that she may continue to support families in teaching the faith with courage, joy, and compassion, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

2. For this newly married couple:

that their home may always be filled with prayer, forgiveness, hospitality, and unwavering trust in God, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

3. For all parents and future parents:

that they may become living witnesses of God's love to their children through word and example, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

4. For children everywhere:

that they may grow in wisdom, kindness, faith, and peace, and always find love and security in their homes, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

5. For families experiencing hardship or division:

that Christ may heal wounds, restore unity, and rekindle hope within their homes, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father,

You are the source of every blessing and the foundation of every faithful home. Hear the prayers we offer with confidence and love, through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice, offered for a home founded on faith, love, and the grace of God, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God. For in Your wisdom and love You created man and woman to become one heart and one life in marriage, so that the home they build together might reflect Your faithful love for Your people. In Christian families You plant the seeds of faith, teach hearts to forgive, and reveal Your presence through tenderness, sacrifice, and prayer. And through the gift of children, You allow love to continue through generations, so that homes may become places where Your name is remembered and praised.

And so, with Angels and Archangels, and with all the saints, we proclaim Your glory, as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching, let us pray with confidence to the Father who desires every Christian home to become a place of faith, love, and peace:

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for this bride and groom,
who come today before God's altar,
that He may lovingly bless them
and make them fruitful in His grace.

Holy Father, creator of all things,
You made man and woman in Your image
and blessed their union with Your love.
Pour out now the abundance of Your blessing
upon these newly married spouses.
Grant that they may build a home
firmly rooted in faith and sustained by prayer.
May they speak words that heal,
practice patience in times of trial,
and remain faithful to one another all the days of their life.
Bless them with the gift of children,
that they may lovingly raise them in the knowledge of Christ
and teach them by word and example to walk always in Your ways.
May their home become a refuge of peace,
a school of kindness, and a living witness of the Gospel.
And after a long and blessed life together,
may they come with all those they love
to the eternal banquet of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, You said to Your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you;
look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.
Strengthen all families in love and reconciliation,
and make every Christian home
a place where Your peace is spoken, lived, and shared.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold Him who welcomes us into the family of God and nourishes
us with His love. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

A home becomes holy not through its size or beauty,
but through the love that lives within it.
Every prayer whispered together, every forgiveness offered,
every sacrifice made in love becomes a quiet stone
in the building of a faithful family.
Today Christ has entered this marriage through the Eucharist.
May He remain at its centre always.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at Your table, O Lord,
we pray that these newly married spouses
may be strengthened by the Body and Blood of Christ

to build a family rooted in faith, steadfast in hope,
and generous in love.

May their home always remain open to Your presence,
their hearts attentive to Your word,
and their lives a blessing to all they meet.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless your marriage with enduring love and deep faith.
Amen.

May He fill your home with peace, joy, and the laughter of children
raised in His ways. **Amen.**

May He strengthen you in every trial, deepen your love through
every season of life, and keep you united in heart and spirit. **Amen.**

And may Almighty God bless all of you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord
by building a home where faith is lived, love is shared,
and future generations may come to know Christ.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“Children may not remember every word their parents say, but they
will never forget the kind of love they saw at home.”

39. Marriage and Mental Wellbeing

Is 41:10; Mt 11:28–30

Theme: “Carrying One Another Gently: Marriage as a Refuge of
Peace, Strength, and Healing.”

INTRODUCTION

In 1987, after climbing out alive from the wreckage of a crashed
airplane, a woman was asked what she remembered most from
those terrifying moments. People expected her to speak about fear,
fire, or chaos. Instead she said: *“What I remember most is a stranger
holding my hand and saying, ‘You are not alone.’”*

Human beings can survive many things when they know they are not
abandoned. One of the deepest promises in Christian marriage is
precisely this: *you will never carry life alone again.*

Today’s readings speak tenderly into the hidden burdens every heart
carries. Through Isaiah, God says: *“Do not fear, for I am with you.”*
And Jesus says in the Gospel: *“Come to me, all you who labour and
are burdened.”* Marriage is not the union of two perfect people, but of
two pilgrims who become strength for one another when life
becomes heavy.

As we begin this sacred celebration, we also acknowledge the
moments when we failed to lighten another’s burden — when our
words wounded instead of healed, when anxiety overcame trust, or
when we forgot that God walks with us. Let us therefore ask the Lord
for mercy and peace.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus,
You come to strengthen the weary and calm troubled hearts:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus,
You teach us to carry one another's burdens with gentleness and love: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus,
You are the refuge of every family seeking peace and hope:
Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God,
who consoles the anxious, strengthens the weak,
and heals every wounded heart,
have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT

O God, source of peace and unfailing strength,
who desire that husband and wife
become for one another a shelter in times of sorrow
and companions in joy, pour out your grace upon N. and N.,
that trusting always in your presence,
they may lighten one another's burdens,
grow in tenderness and patience,
and become living signs of your compassionate love in the world.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

HOMILY

A firefighter once shared the hardest part of his work. He said it was not entering burning buildings. It was hearing people inside cry out: *"Is anybody there?"*

And he said, *"The moment they hear a voice answering back, panic changes. Hope enters."*

That is exactly what God says today through the prophet Isaiah: *"Do not fear, for I am with you."*

And that is what Christian marriage is meant to become: a lifelong answer to the question, *"Is anybody there?"*

N. and N., today you are not merely promising romance. You are promising presence. In a world where many feel emotionally exhausted, mentally burdened, anxious, isolated, and overwhelmed, your marriage is called to become a refuge where hearts can breathe again.

Jesus says in today's Gospel:

"Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest."

Notice that Jesus does not say, "I will remove every problem immediately." He says, *"I will give you rest."*

Peace is not the absence of storms. Peace is knowing who stands beside you in the storm.

A man once visited a therapist because his anxiety had become unbearable. The therapist asked him, "When do you feel most calm?"

The man replied, "Oddly enough, when my wife sits beside me and says nothing."

Not every healing comes through advice. Sometimes healing comes through presence.

That is one of the holiest vocations in marriage: becoming a safe place for another soul.

There will be days when one of you feels strong while the other feels fragile. Days when silence replaces laughter. Days when stress from work, disappointments, family struggles, sickness, or hidden fears weigh heavily upon your hearts. On those days, remember this: marriage is not a competition about who is stronger. It is a covenant where each carries the other when needed.

A young boy once watched his little sister sleeping on his back while he carried her up a steep hill. Someone said, “She must be heavy.” The boy answered, “*She’s not heavy. She’s my sister.*”

Love changes weight into gift.

That is why Jesus also says: “*My yoke is easy and my burden light.*” Two oxen carried a yoke together so that the stronger could help the weaker. In Christian marriage, Christ Himself enters the yoke with you. You are never carrying life by yourselves.

Mental wellbeing in marriage is not built merely by avoiding conflict. It is built by creating trust — the confidence that even in weakness, failure, confusion, or fear, one will not be abandoned by the other.

Sometimes the greatest sentence a husband or wife can say is not “I have solutions,” but simply:

“I am here.”

“I will stay.”

“We will face this together.”

And when human strength becomes insufficient, grace begins its work.

An elderly husband visited his wife daily in a nursing home although she no longer recognized him because of dementia. Someone asked him, “Why do you still go every day if she doesn’t know who you are?”

He smiled and replied, “*Because I still know who she is.*”

That is covenant love.

That is faithful love.

That is the kind of love Christ has for us.

N. and N., may your home become a place where burdens grow lighter, where tears are never mocked, where struggles are spoken honestly, where prayer is natural, where laughter returns after sorrow, and where Christ is always welcomed as the unseen companion at your table.

And whenever life becomes heavy — as it sometimes will — may you hear again the voice of the Lord saying:

“*Do not fear. I am with you.*”

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in the God who strengthens the weary and walks beside all who are burdened, let us bring before Him our prayers for the Church, the world, and this newly married couple.

1. For the Church:

That she may always become a refuge of compassion, healing, and hope for all who are emotionally burdened or searching for peace.

Lord, hear our prayer.

2. For N. and N.:

That their marriage may be filled with patience, emotional strength, gentle understanding, and enduring trust in God's presence.

Lord, hear our prayer.

3. For married couples and families:

That homes may become places of listening, encouragement, forgiveness, and mental and spiritual wellbeing.

Lord, hear our prayer.

4. For those struggling with anxiety, loneliness, depression, or hidden emotional wounds:

That they may encounter people who remind them that they are not alone. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For all gathered here:

That we may learn to carry one another's burdens with kindness and become instruments of Christ's peace in the world.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father,
you never abandon your children in their struggles.
Hear the prayers we place before you today
and grant them according to your loving will.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters,
that this sacrifice, offered for a love that seeks to strengthen,
heal, and uplift,
may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in your wisdom and love
you created man and woman
to walk together through the joys and burdens of life,
so that no heart might journey alone.

In Christ your Son,
you reveal yourself as the God who comforts the weary,
strengthens the anxious,
and brings peace to troubled souls.
And in the Sacrament of Matrimony
you make husband and wife signs of that compassionate presence,
calling them to support one another with patience, tenderness, and
enduring fidelity.

Through their covenant of love,
you remind the world
that true strength is found not in power,
but in faithful love that remains steadfast in every season.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
and with all the hosts and powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command
and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray to the Father who never abandons His children
and who gathers all weary hearts into His peace:

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord
for these newly married spouses,
that He who has brought them together
in the covenant of Matrimony
may continue to strengthen their union with His grace.

Holy Father,
creator of love and giver of peace,
look with kindness upon N. and N.,
who today entrust their lives
to one another before your altar.

Grant that they may become for each other
a refuge in moments of anxiety,
strength in times of weakness, comfort in sorrow,
and joyful companions in every blessing.

Teach them to listen with patience,
to speak with gentleness,
and to carry one another's burdens with tender love.

When trials arise, let them never lose heart,
but deepen their trust in your presence,
knowing that you walk beside them always.

Bless their home with serenity, laughter, and prayer.
May they be enriched with the gift of children,
and raise them in wisdom, faith, and compassion.

Grant that all who enter their home
may experience welcome, peace, and hope.

And after a long and blessed life together,
bring them with all the saints
to the eternal wedding feast of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
who said to your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.
Strengthen especially all families burdened by anxiety,
fear, and division,
and make every Christian home
a dwelling place of consolation and hope.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who strengthens the weary
and brings rest to every searching heart.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Love does not remove every burden from life,
but it changes how burdens are carried.
Today Christ has entered the covenant of N. and N. not as a distant
guest,
but as the quiet strength within their marriage.
May this Eucharist remind them always
that no darkness is greater than God's presence,
and no burden becomes unbearable
when carried together in faith and love.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at the table of your love,
we pray, O Lord,
that N. and N. may always find in this holy sacrament
strength for times of weakness,
peace amid anxiety,
and joy in faithful companionship.

May their marriage become a sign of your healing presence
and a blessing to all whom they meet.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

Amen.

May He strengthen you in every trial,
calm your fears,
and fill your home with enduring peace.

Amen.

May He teach you to carry one another's burdens with patience and
tenderness,
and bless you with children and a family rich in faith and love.

Amen.

And may almighty God bless all of you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by becoming for one another
a refuge of love, strength, and hope.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

"A strong marriage is not one where two people never struggle,
but one where neither has to struggle alone."

40. Balancing Work, Family, and Faith

Psalm 127; Luke 10:38–42

Theme: “Building a Home Where Work Serves Love, and Faith Gives Rest.”

INTRODUCTION

In Japan there is a story about a businessman who worked so hard for his family that he almost lost them without noticing. Every night he came home after his children were asleep. One evening, exhausted, he entered quietly and found a note on the table from his little daughter: “Daddy, thank you for the house, the toys, and the food. But when will you come home to us?”

That note shattered him. He realized he had spent years building a living, but not building a life.

Psalm 127 reminds us today: *“Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build.”* Martha in the Gospel is busy serving, while Mary sits at the feet of Jesus. Jesus does not condemn work; He restores balance. A home becomes holy not merely because people work hard in it, but because love, presence, prayer, and peace dwell there.

Today, as this couple comes before God to begin married life, we are reminded that many of us become anxious, distracted, overworked, impatient, or spiritually tired. We ask the Lord to heal our restless hearts, to restore what truly matters, and to teach us again the better part that leads to lasting joy. And so, trusting in His mercy, let us acknowledge our sins.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You teach us that without You our labour loses its meaning: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, You call us to sit at Your feet and find rest for our souls: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You bless homes where faith, love, and peace are placed before anxiety and distraction: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us the times we allowed work, worry, and selfish ambition to overshadow love, family, and faith; may He restore peace within our homes and teach us to build our lives upon His presence, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Heavenly Father,
You are the source of every good home and every lasting love. Teach this couple to build their marriage not merely upon success and achievement, but upon prayer, tenderness, patience, and trust in You. In moments of busyness, give them balance; in moments of fatigue, renew their strength; and amid the demands of life, keep their hearts rooted in what truly matters. May their home become a place of peace, welcome, faith, and joy for all who enter it. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

HOMILY

A professor once carried a large glass jar into his classroom. He filled it first with big rocks. Then he asked his students, “Is the jar full?” They answered yes.

Then he poured in pebbles that slipped into the empty spaces.

Again he asked, “Is it full?”

Then came sand. Finally, he poured coffee into the jar.

The lesson was unforgettable. The big rocks represented the essential things of life: God, family, love, health, relationships. The pebbles and sand were work, possessions, schedules, and endless obligations. If you fill life first with the small things, there is no room left for what matters most.

That is exactly the tension we hear in today’s Gospel. Martha is busy. Mary is present. Martha is distracted by many things. Mary chooses the one thing necessary.

Jesus does not criticize responsibility. He does not condemn hard work. After all, Joseph Himself worked with his hands; Peter was a fisherman; Paul made tents. Work is holy when it serves love. But work becomes dangerous when it slowly replaces presence, tenderness, prayer, and relationship.

Many marriages do not collapse suddenly. They erode quietly. Two people begin by saying, “We are doing this for the family.” Then schedules become crowded, conversations become shorter, meals become rushed, prayer disappears, and eventually two people who once shared dreams begin merely sharing a house.

A nurse once recounted the final regrets of dying patients. She said one of the most repeated sentences she heard was this: “I wish I had

spent more time with the people I love.” Nobody said, “I wish I had worked more weekends.”

Dear couple, today God is not asking you to choose between work and family, or between responsibility and prayer. He is asking you to keep the right order. Let God be first, love second, and work in service of both.

Psalm 127 says: *“In vain is your earlier rising or your going later to rest, you who toil for the bread you eat, for He gives to His beloved in sleep.”* What a powerful line. God does not want your home to become a factory of exhaustion. He wants it to become a sanctuary of peace.

There is an old Jewish tradition that every Sabbath evening, the father would place his hands upon the heads of his children and bless them. Imagine that. Before ambition, before business, before pressure—there was blessing. Perhaps modern families are not suffering from lack of technology or income as much as they are suffering from lack of presence.

One evening a little boy dropped his spoon at dinner just to see if his father would look up from his phone. The father never noticed. The child whispered to his mother, “Maybe Daddy lives inside that screen.”

That sentence hurts because it reveals a deep hunger of the human heart: the hunger to be seen.

Marriage is not only about sharing responsibilities. It is about seeing one another deeply and remaining emotionally present.

Dear friends, this couple will face deadlines, bills, fatigue, unexpected worries, and perhaps moments when life feels overwhelmingly busy. But if they continue making room for prayer

together, meals together, silence together, and time for one another, their home will remain strong.

A marriage survives not because life becomes easy, but because two people repeatedly return to what is essential.

And this is where Mary becomes so important in today's Gospel. She sat at the feet of Jesus. Before serving, she listened. Before doing, she remained. Before activity, she chose presence.

The greatest gift you can give each other is not perfection. It is presence.

A husband once asked his elderly wife after fifty years of marriage, "What kept us together all these years?"

She smiled and replied, "We lived in a generation where if something broke, we repaired it instead of replacing it."

That is the wisdom of Christian marriage. There will be tired days, misunderstandings, and storms. But when Christ remains at the centre, love learns to repair, forgive, wait, and begin again.

And let us end with this.

Years ago, during a massive blackout in a city, one apartment building remained glowing with candlelight. A reporter later asked the family inside why they seemed so peaceful while everyone else panicked. The mother answered: "Because before the lights went out, we already knew how to sit together."

That is the kind of home God desires for this couple:
a home where prayer is natural,
where love is visible,
where work serves life rather than consuming it,

where Christ is not a guest occasionally invited in, but the foundation upon which everything stands.

For unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Celebrating God's gift of love and family, let us now bring before Him our prayers for this couple, for the Church, and for the world.

1. For the Church:

That the Church may continue to guide families to build homes rooted in prayer, compassion, and trust in God, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

2. For this bride and groom:

That they may never allow the pressures of life to overshadow their love for one another and their relationship with God, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

3. For families everywhere:

That homes burdened by stress, financial worries, overwork, or division may rediscover peace, communication, and healing, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

4. For parents and children:

That families may treasure time together, listening hearts, shared meals, and moments of prayer, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For all gathered here:

That we may learn to seek first what truly matters and build our lives upon Christ, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Father of love and peace,
hear the prayers we offer today.
Teach us to balance the demands of life
with the deeper call to love and holiness.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice,
offered for a home founded upon faith, love, and peace,
and for a marriage strengthened amid the demands of daily life,
may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give You thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For You created man and woman in love
and called them to walk together through all the seasons of life.
In Your wisdom You bless the labour of human hands,
yet You remind us that no work has meaning
unless hearts remain rooted in Your presence.

In Christ Your Son,
You teach us that amid the anxieties and distractions of life,
the better part is to remain close to You.
You sanctify homes where forgiveness is practiced,
where burdens are shared,
where prayer is cherished,
and where love becomes a daily offering.

Today You rejoice with this couple
as they begin their married life before Your altar.
May their home reflect the peace of Nazareth,
the faith of Mary,
the fidelity of Joseph,
and the joy of Christ dwelling among them.

And so, with Angels and Saints,
we praise You, as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching, let us pray
to the Father who desires every home to become a place of peace,
trust, forgiveness, and love.

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for this bride and groom,
who today begin their life together in the Sacrament of Marriage.

Holy Father,
creator of heaven and earth,
You formed man and woman in Your image
and blessed their union with the gift of love.

Pour out the grace of Your Holy Spirit upon this husband and wife.
Grant that amid the duties and pressures of life
they may never lose sight of one another
nor drift away from Your presence.

Teach them to build a home filled with prayer and kindness,
where burdens are shared,
where forgiveness is quick,

where joy is treasured,
and where all who enter may experience welcome and peace.

Bless their work,
that it may provide what is needed for life
without overshadowing the deeper call to love.
Give them wisdom in times of difficulty,
strength in moments of weariness,
and gratitude in times of blessing.

May they be blessed with children,
and become loving and wise parents,
raising their family in faith, hope, and compassion.

As they grow older together,
may they continue to seek You above all things
until they rejoice forever in the home You prepare in heaven.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
You said to Your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.
Look not on our sins, but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with Your will.
May the homes of Your faithful become places of reconciliation,
attentive listening, shared burdens, and quiet trust in Your presence.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold Him who strengthens weary hearts and teaches us the better
part that never fades.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

A strong marriage is not built in grand moments alone.
It is built in small daily choices:
to listen instead of ignore,
to pray instead of despair,
to forgive instead of keep score,
to be present instead of distracted.

Today Christ has entered this marriage through the Eucharist.
May this couple always remember
that the secret of a peaceful home
is not found in having more, but in loving more deeply
and placing God at the centre of everything.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lord our God,
in this Eucharist You have nourished us with the Bread of Life and
strengthened this newly married couple with Your grace.
Help them to build a home where faith guides decisions, love
overcomes weariness, and peace remains stronger than anxiety.
May they always find time for one another and for You amid the
demands of daily life.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless this husband and wife with hearts attentive to one another and faithful to Him.

Amen.

May He grant them wisdom to balance work, family, and faith with generosity and peace.

Amen.

May their home become a refuge of love, prayer, laughter, and hospitality for many years to come.

Amen.

And may Almighty God bless you all,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go forth in peace, glorifying the Lord by building homes where love is present, burdens are shared, and Christ remains at the centre.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“A successful life is not measured only by what we achieve, but by whom we love, how deeply we are present, and whether Christ remains at the centre of our home.”

41. The Importance of Shared Values

Amos 3:3; Matthew 18:19–20

Theme: “Walking in One Direction: Building a Marriage on Shared Values, Shared Faith, and Shared Purpose.”

INTRODUCTION

In 1914, explorer Ernest Shackleton set out across Antarctica with twenty-seven men. Their ship, *Endurance*, became trapped in ice and was eventually crushed. For months they drifted on frozen seas, hungry and exhausted. Yet every man survived. Historians later asked how such a miracle happened. One crew member answered simply: “We all trusted the same leader, held the same hope, and pulled in the same direction.” In the harshest conditions, what saved them was not strength alone, but unity of vision.

That is the wisdom hidden in today’s readings. The prophet Amos asks: “*Can two walk together unless they are agreed?*” Jesus says: “*Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst.*” Marriage is not merely living under the same roof. It is learning to walk in the same direction — with shared values, shared faith, shared dreams, and shared commitment to God.

But all of us know how often pride, selfishness, impatience, and wounded words pull relationships apart. Therefore, before we celebrate this covenant of love, let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord to unite our hearts more deeply in His mercy.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You call husbands and wives to walk together in truth, faith, and love: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, You remain present wherever hearts are united in Your name: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You heal division and strengthen families with the grace of unity: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May Almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us the moments when we chose pride over unity,
selfishness over love, and silence over understanding;
may He strengthen us to walk together in faith, hope, and charity,
and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

COLLECT

Heavenly Father,
You created man and woman to walk together in love and fidelity.
Pour out Your grace upon N. and N.,
that grounded in shared faith, shared values, and mutual trust,
they may become a living sign of Your presence in the world.
Teach them to seek one another in times of joy and trial,
to pray together, forgive one another,
and walk always in the same direction toward You.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,
who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

HOMILY

In 1968, construction began on the Sydney Opera House parking structure. Everything seemed perfect — until cracks began appearing throughout the building. Engineers discovered the problem was not in the walls or the roof. The foundation pillars were misaligned by only a few centimetres. Small misalignment. Massive consequences. That is the truth about marriage.

Many marriages do not collapse suddenly because of one dramatic moment. They slowly weaken because two people begin walking in different directions — different priorities, different values, different understandings of life itself. Amos asks a piercing question today: *“Can two walk together unless they are agreed?”* The answer is obvious. They may stand beside each other physically, but spiritually and emotionally they drift apart.

The deepest unity in marriage is not found in hobbies, attraction, or even personality. It is found in shared values rooted in God.

A journalist once interviewed couples who had remained happily married for over fifty years. He expected romantic answers. Instead, one elderly woman said: “We survived because when we disagreed, we still agreed on what mattered most.” That is wisdom. Shared values become anchors during storms.

Jesus says in today’s Gospel: *“Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst.”* Notice — Jesus does not merely bless marriage from a distance. He lives within it when husband and wife gather in His name. A Christian marriage is not simply two people trying hard to love each other. It is three persons walking together: husband, wife, and Christ.

There is a moving story from Japan after the 2011 tsunami. A rescue team found an elderly couple sitting silently on the ruins of their home. They had lost everything. One rescuer asked how they remained so calm. The husband answered: “The house is gone. But the things we built our life on are still here.” Then he gently pointed to his wife. Shared values survive when possessions disappear.

Dear N. and N., today you are not simply promising to stay together. You are promising to keep choosing the same direction. There will be moments when careers pull you one way, disappointments another way, and exhaustion another. The world often teaches couples to ask: “What do I want?” But the Gospel teaches married people to ask: “What kind of people are we becoming together?”

Shared prayer matters. Shared honesty matters. Shared compassion matters. Shared priorities matter. A marriage cannot thrive if one heart seeks God while the other seeks only self.

A young boy once watched his parents dance slowly in the kitchen late at night after a long exhausting day. He later wrote: “That was the moment I learned love is not excitement. Love is choosing each other again and again.” That is marriage. Not perfection — but daily alignment of hearts.

And this alignment becomes strongest in prayer.

When couples pray together, they begin seeing life through the same light. They forgive faster. They listen better. They dream more deeply. They discover that unity is not uniformity; it is harmony.

At the end of his life, an old farmer was asked the secret of his sixty-year marriage. He smiled and said: “Every morning before sunrise, we sat on the porch with coffee and asked God to keep us walking side by side. Some days one of us walked slower. Some days one of

us carried the other. But we never stopped walking toward the same horizon.”

That horizon is not merely happiness. It is holiness.

And if N. and N. keep Christ at the centre, then one day — through every joy, every wound, every sacrifice, every forgiveness — they will discover that marriage is not simply about finding the right person. It is about becoming the right people together before God.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

United in faith and gathered in the presence of Christ who blesses all who walk in His name, let us now offer our prayers to God our Father.

1. For the Church, that she may continue to guide families and married couples toward unity, fidelity, and holiness, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
2. For N. and N., that their marriage may always be rooted in shared faith, shared values, and deep trust in God’s providence, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
3. For married couples who struggle with division, misunderstanding, or wounded relationships, that God may restore peace and unity in their homes, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
4. For children and young people, that they may grow within families where love, honesty, forgiveness, and prayer are lived each day, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
5. For all who have died, especially loved ones who supported N. and N. in faith and love, that they may rejoice forever in the eternal home of God, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Father of love and unity,
hear the prayers we place before You today.
Strengthen us to walk together in faith and charity,
until we reach the fullness of joy in Your kingdom.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice, offered for a couple choosing to walk together in faith, love, and shared purpose, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give You thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in Your wisdom You call man and woman
to walk together in unity of heart and spirit,
so that through mutual love, shared faith, and faithful sacrifice,
they may reveal Your presence to the world.

In Christ, You teach us
that where hearts are gathered in His name,
there He remains among them,
strengthening homes with peace, forgiveness, and hope.

Today You bless N. and N.,
who begin their married life before Your altar,
asking that their values may remain rooted in the Gospel,

their love steadfast in trials,
and their home radiant with prayer and charity.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of Your glory, as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray with one voice to the Father
who calls us to walk together as His children.

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for N. and N.,
who come today to begin their married life at God's altar.

Holy Father, Creator of love and source of unity,
look with kindness upon these Your servants
who now join their lives before You.

Grant that they may walk together in one faith and one spirit,
support one another in times of joy and difficulty,
and always seek what is true, good, and holy.

May their home be filled with prayer, understanding, and peace.
May they remain faithful in love, patient in suffering,
generous in forgiveness, and steadfast in hope.

Bless them with the gift of children,
that they may raise them in wisdom, compassion,
and reverence for You.

And after a long and fruitful life together,
may they come with all who love them
to the eternal banquet of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, You said to Your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.
Look not on our sins, but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with Your will.
Strengthen especially the peace of this newly married couple,
that their hearts may remain united in truth, patience,
and shared love throughout all the seasons of life.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold Him who strengthens all who walk together in faith and love.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Shared values are not built in one day.
They are formed in thousands of quiet choices —
in forgiveness after arguments,
in prayers whispered before sleep,
in sacrifices unnoticed by the world,
and in the daily decision to keep walking together.

Today Christ has entered this marriage through the Eucharist.
May He remain the centre toward whom both hearts continually turn.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lord our God,
through this holy Eucharist
You have nourished us with the Bread of unity and love.
Grant that N. and N., strengthened by this sacrament,
may remain faithful to the values they profess today
and continue to walk together in the light of Christ.

Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you united in heart and spirit.
Amen.

May He strengthen your home with faith, patience, forgiveness, and
enduring love. **Amen.**

May He grant that your lives together become a witness of peace,
hope, and holiness to all who know you. **Amen.**

And may Almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son ✠, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by walking together in faith, love,
and shared purpose.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“A strong marriage is not built by two people merely staying together,
but by two hearts continually choosing the same direction under
God.”

42. Fidelity in the Age of Social Media

Heb 13:4–8; Mt 5:27–30

Theme: “Guarding the Heart: Fidelity in a Distracted World.”

INTRODUCTION

Years ago, a journalist interviewed an elderly man who had been married for sixty-five years. The reporter asked him, “What is the secret of your lasting marriage?” The old man smiled and pointed to the pocket watch he carried every day. “This watch belonged to my father,” he said. “When it stopped working, he repaired it. When the glass cracked, he replaced it. Today people throw away what is damaged. But love survives when people choose to protect what is precious.”

We live in a time when screens constantly compete for our attention. A marriage can quietly weaken not because of one dramatic betrayal, but because hearts slowly drift away through distractions, hidden conversations, secret comparisons, and the temptation to seek emotional comfort elsewhere. The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us today: “Let marriage be held in honour by all.” And Jesus speaks with startling honesty about guarding not only our actions, but also our hearts and our eyes. Fidelity begins long before betrayal; it begins in the hidden choices of the soul.

Today, as this couple comes before God, they are not only promising to stay together physically, but to remain faithful emotionally, spiritually, and digitally — choosing one another again and again in a world full of distractions. Yet all of us know that we have not always loved with purity of heart, integrity, or faithfulness. Therefore, with humility, let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord for mercy and healing.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You call husbands and wives to honour one another with faithful hearts: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, You teach us to guard our eyes, our words, and our desires from all that harms love: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You remain the same yesterday, today, and forever, steadfast in covenant love: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God
cleanse our hearts from every hidden unfaithfulness,
heal the wounds caused by selfishness and distraction,
strengthen us in truth and purity of love,
forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT

O God,
who teach us that love is sacred, faithful, and enduring,
look kindly upon this couple
who today entrust their lives to one another before your altar.
In a world filled with distractions and passing attractions,
grant them the grace to guard their hearts,
to honour one another with sincerity and trust,
and to remain steadfast in covenant love.
May their marriage reflect the unwavering fidelity
with which Christ loves his Church.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

HOMILY

A sailor once told the story of a lighthouse keeper during a violent storm. The waves crashed against the rocks, and visibility disappeared into darkness. Ships survived because one small light remained steady. Years later, the sailor said: “What saved us was not the strength of the ship, but the faithfulness of the light.”

Marriage today is very much like that stormy sea. Couples are navigating not only ordinary struggles, but also a world of endless digital distractions. Social media can connect people across continents while quietly separating hearts sitting at the same table. A husband and wife may share the same house while living in different emotional worlds — one scrolling endlessly, another silently longing to be seen. Fidelity today is no longer challenged only by physical infidelity; it is challenged by divided attention, emotional secrecy, private fantasies, addictive validation, and the slow erosion of intimacy.

That is why today’s readings are so powerful and timely. Hebrews tells us: “Let marriage be held in honor by all.” Marriage is not merely a contract of convenience; it is sacred ground. It is a covenant where two people say: “I will protect your dignity, your trust, and your heart.” And then Jesus speaks with radical honesty in the Gospel. He tells us that fidelity begins not merely in behavior but in the interior life. Long before hands wander, eyes wander. Long before promises break, attention drifts. Long before betrayal becomes visible, the heart has already begun to negotiate compromises in secret.

There is an old story about a violin maker in Italy. One day a young apprentice accidentally damaged a priceless violin. Terrified, he expected anger and punishment. Instead, the old craftsman carefully took the instrument in his hands and said: “The value of this violin is

not proven when it is perfect, but when someone is willing to protect and restore it.” In every marriage there will be moments of weakness, temptation, misunderstanding, and hurt. Fidelity does not mean never struggling. Fidelity means refusing to stop protecting what God has entrusted to you.

And this protection requires intentional choices. In a digital world, love must become disciplined. Sometimes fidelity means putting down the phone and looking into each other’s eyes. Sometimes it means refusing secret conversations that slowly steal emotional intimacy. Sometimes it means choosing transparency over privacy, presence over distraction, and truth over fantasy. Real love is not sustained by constant excitement; it is sustained by daily acts of reverence.

A nurse who worked for many years in palliative care once said that she never heard dying people say: “I wish I had spent more time online.” But she often heard people say: “I wish I had loved better. I wish I had been more present.” At the end of life, no number of followers, likes, or messages will matter. What will matter is whether someone felt safe in our love.

Dear couple, today you are not simply exchanging rings. You are becoming guardians of one another’s hearts. The world will constantly invite you to compare, consume, and drift. But your vocation is different. Your calling is to create a sanctuary of trust where neither fear nor secrecy can survive.

And remember this: fidelity is not sustained by human strength alone. Hebrews reminds us that Christ is “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Human emotions fluctuate; God’s love does not. The same Christ who blesses your marriage today will remain beside you

in every ordinary day, every temptation, every misunderstanding, every reconciliation, and every silent sacrifice.

Many years ago, after celebrating their seventieth wedding anniversary, an elderly woman was asked, “Did you ever think of divorce?” She laughed gently and replied, “Divorce? No. Murder perhaps — but never divorce.” Then she became serious and added: “We survived because every morning we decided that our love was more important than our pride.”

That is the secret of fidelity. Not perfection, but daily choosing. Daily protecting. Daily returning. In a world where so much is temporary, may your marriage become like that lighthouse in the storm — steady, faithful, and bright enough to guide others safely home.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in the faithful love of God, who calls married couples to guard and strengthen the covenant of love, let us now present our prayers before him.

1. For the Church, that she may courageously proclaim the beauty of faithful and holy marriage in a distracted and divided world, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
2. For this newly married couple, that their hearts may remain truthful, transparent, and deeply rooted in Christ’s enduring love, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
3. For husbands and wives struggling with mistrust, loneliness, temptation, or emotional distance, that God may heal and renew their relationships, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

4. For young people growing up in a digital age, that they may learn to value purity, integrity, and authentic human connection over superficial attention, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For our departed loved ones and for all who faithfully lived their vocation of love and sacrifice, that they may rejoice forever in God’s eternal kingdom, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Father of enduring love, hear the prayers we place before you today. Strengthen us to live with faithful hearts and steadfast love, through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice, offered for a love that seeks faithfulness and truth, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in your wisdom you created man and woman
to live no longer for themselves alone,
but to become one heart and one life in faithful covenant.
In every age you call married couples
to reflect your steadfast love —
a love that does not abandon, betray, or grow weary.

In this time of many distractions and divided loyalties,
you remind us through Christ your Son

that true fidelity begins in the heart
and is strengthened by grace, truth, and sacrifice.
Through the Sacrament of Matrimony
you consecrate human love,
making it a living sign of Christ's faithful union with the Church.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray with confidence to the Father
who calls us to live in faithful love and truthful hearts:

NUPTIAL BLESSING OVER THE COUPLE

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for this bride and groom,
who today begin their married life at this altar,
that God may bless them with unity of heart and enduring fidelity.

O God,
creator of all love and source of every blessing,
look with kindness upon these newlyweds
who have entrusted themselves to one another
in the covenant of marriage.

Grant that they may guard each other's hearts
with tenderness and truth.
Keep them faithful in mind, heart, word, and action.

In moments of temptation, strengthen them;
in moments of weakness, restore them;
in moments of joy, deepen their gratitude.

Teach them to place one another above every distraction,
to speak honestly, forgive generously,
and remain steadfast in the promises they make today.

Bless them with the gift of children,
that their home may be filled with life, laughter, wisdom, and faith.
May they be loving parents and faithful witnesses of Christian family
life.

May their marriage become a light for others,
a refuge of trust in a restless world,
and a sign of Christ's enduring love for his Church.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
who said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.

Strengthen all married couples to live in honesty, trust,
and faithful love amid the distractions of this world.

Who live and reign for ever and ever.

Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who remains forever faithful and true,
who strengthens human love with divine grace.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Love survives not because life becomes easy,
but because two people continue choosing one another
when the world offers countless distractions.
Today Christ has entered this marriage through the Eucharist.
May his faithful presence become the quiet strength
that protects this couple's hearts, deepens their trust,
and teaches them to love not only in words,
but also in daily sacrifice and steadfast presence.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at the table of your Son,
we ask you, Lord,
to strengthen this newly married couple
with the grace of enduring fidelity and peace.
May the sacrament they have received today
guard them from division, heal them in times of weakness,
and keep their hearts united in truth and love.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you faithful in love.

Amen.

May he protect your hearts from all that weakens trust and unity, and
fill your home with peace and joy.

Amen.

May Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, remain
beside you in every season of married life.

Amen.

And may almighty God bless all of you,
the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by lives of faithful love,
steadfast hearts, and enduring commitment.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“Fidelity is not only staying together physically;
it is protecting each other's hearts every single day.”

43. Silence, Reflection, and Presence in Marriage

1 Kings 19:11–13; Mark 6:30–32

Theme: “In the Quiet Presence of God: Building a Marriage that Listens, Rests, and Remains.”

INTRODUCTION

In 1997, a violinist named Joshua Bell played one of the most difficult pieces ever written on a violin worth millions of dollars. Yet almost nobody stopped to listen. Why? Because he was not in a concert hall. He was standing in a busy subway station where people were too rushed, too distracted, too noisy inside to notice beauty standing right before them. Years later Bell said something haunting: “People were present physically, but absent inwardly.”

That is becoming one of the deepest struggles of modern love. Couples can share the same table, the same bed, even the same life, yet slowly stop hearing each other. Noise fills homes: phones, schedules, worries, ambitions, endless distractions. And sometimes what dies first in marriage is not love itself, but silence — the sacred silence where hearts truly meet.

Today’s readings remind us that God was not found in the earthquake, wind, or fire, but in the gentle whisper. Jesus Himself invited His disciples: “Come away by yourselves and rest awhile.” As we begin this Eucharist, let us ask forgiveness for the times we have been too busy to listen, too distracted to be present, and too noisy within to hear the voice of God and the hearts of those we love.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You speak in the silence of loving hearts:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You call weary souls to come away and rest in Your presence: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You teach us to listen before speaking and to love by being fully present: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May Almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us the times we have ignored His gentle voice,
neglected one another through distraction and impatience,
and failed to create homes of peace, reflection, and loving presence;
and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

COLLECT

O God,
who reveal Your presence not in noise and power
but in the quiet whisper of love and grace,
grant that these Your servants,
joined today in the covenant of marriage,
may learn to listen deeply to You and to one another,
to find rest in each other’s presence,
and to build a home filled with peace,
prayer, tenderness, and faithful love.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,
who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

HOMILY

A journalist once visited an elderly monastery hidden in the mountains. He noticed something strange immediately: the monks hardly spoke. Meals were quiet. Work was quiet. Even their walking seemed quiet. Finally he asked an old monk, “Why is silence so important here?”

The monk smiled and replied, “Because only in silence do we hear what is essential.”

Then he pointed toward a bell tower and said: “When there is too much noise inside you, even God sounds distant.”

That may be one of the greatest lessons for marriage today.

Not every marriage breaks because of hatred. Some slowly weaken because of noise. Endless activity. Constant distraction. Emotional exhaustion. People speaking without listening. Couples reacting without reflecting. Two hearts living beside each other, but no longer truly encountering each other.

In the First Reading, Elijah expects God in dramatic ways — wind, earthquake, fire. But God comes as a gentle whisper. Why? Because love rarely shouts. The deepest realities in life usually arrive quietly: trust, forgiveness, tenderness, fidelity, prayer.

And in the Gospel, Jesus tells His exhausted disciples: “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile.” Notice this carefully: Jesus does not only teach them to work. He teaches them to rest. He teaches them to withdraw from noise. He teaches them that relationships die when souls are never renewed.

A marriage cannot survive only on activity. It needs presence.

There is a difference between being near someone and being present to them.

A husband may sit beside his wife while his mind is somewhere else. A wife may hear words without hearing the heart beneath them. Families today often suffer not from absence of communication, but from absence of attention.

One woman once said after fifty years of marriage: “The greatest gift my husband gave me was not money or success. It was that whenever I spoke, he put everything down and listened as if my words mattered.”

That is sacred love.

Listening is one of the holiest forms of love because it says: “Your soul is worth my time.”

And silence in marriage is not emptiness. Silence can become a sanctuary. A place where wounds heal. A place where anger calms down before words become destructive. A place where two people remember why they chose each other.

A young couple once visited an old married pair known for their extraordinary closeness. They asked, “What is the secret to staying happy together for sixty years?”

The old husband laughed and answered, “Every evening we sat on the porch together for thirty minutes without trying to fix anything. We simply stayed present to each other.”

That sounds simple. But in today’s world, it is revolutionary.

Because modern life trains people to react instantly, scroll endlessly, answer immediately, and rush constantly. But love grows differently. Love grows slowly. Quietly. Patiently.

And perhaps this is why God chose a whisper.

Because whispers require closeness.

You cannot hear a whisper from far away. You must lean in. You must stop moving. You must pay attention.

The same is true in marriage.

To hear each other's fears, hopes, exhaustion, disappointments, and dreams, couples must keep drawing close again and again — emotionally, spiritually, physically, prayerfully.

And this closeness must include God.

For silence without God can become emptiness. But silence with God becomes peace.

A home where people pray together, rest together, and truly listen to one another becomes more than a house. It becomes refuge. Sanctuary. Holy ground.

Years ago, after the death of his wife, an elderly man was asked what he missed most after forty-eight years of marriage. People expected him to mention her cooking, her laughter, or her companionship.

Instead, with tears in his eyes, he quietly said: "I miss the silence we shared."

What a beautiful sentence.

Not awkward silence. Not angry silence. But the silence of two souls so united that words were no longer always necessary.

That is what God desires for this couple today: not merely a successful marriage, but a deeply present one. A marriage where they do not lose each other in the noise of the world. A marriage where prayer interrupts panic. Where listening heals wounds. Where silence becomes tenderness. Where God is heard in the gentle whisper between them.

And one day, after many years together, may they look at each other and realize: in a noisy world, they became each other's place of peace.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered in the quiet presence of God, who speaks to loving hearts in gentleness and peace, let us bring before Him our prayers for the Church, the world, and this newly married couple.

1. For the Church, that she may always help people discover God not only in words and activity, but also in silence, prayer, and compassionate listening, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

2. For married couples throughout the world, that they may create homes where people are truly heard, respected, forgiven, and loved, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

3. For N. and N., united today in Holy Matrimony, that their marriage may become a sanctuary of peace where God's gentle voice is always welcomed, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

4. For families burdened by stress, conflict, noise, and division, that they may rediscover the healing gift of presence, patience, and prayerful silence, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For all who feel lonely, unheard, or forgotten, that they may encounter people who listen with compassion and love with sincerity, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father,
You speak to Your children in gentleness and peace.
Hear these prayers we place before You today,
and teach us to remain close to You and to one another
through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters,
that this sacrifice, offered in gratitude for the gift of love, presence,
and faithful companionship,
may be acceptable to God, the Almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give You thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in Your wisdom You created man and woman
to walk together in love,
not only in moments of celebration and joy,
but also in quiet faithfulness and daily presence.

You teach us through Your Son
that weary hearts need rest,

that love deepens through listening,
and that Your voice is often heard
not in the noise of the world
but in the stillness of trusting hearts.

Today You bless N. and N.,
calling them to become for one another
a refuge of peace, encouragement, and tenderness.
May their home become a place of prayer,
where silence is filled with understanding,
and where Your gentle presence is never absent.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of Your glory, as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray with confidence to the Father
who calls us to live in peace,
to listen with love, and to rest in His presence.

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for this bride and groom,
who come today to begin their life together
in the covenant of marriage.

Holy Father, creator of love and giver of peace,
pour out Your blessing upon N. and N.,
who today entrust their lives to one another before Your altar.

Grant that their marriage
may be a dwelling place of peace and understanding,
where words are spoken with kindness,
where silence is filled with trust,
and where each may always find rest
in the presence of the other.

Teach them to listen patiently,
to forgive quickly,
to comfort tenderly,
and to seek Your voice together
in moments of joy and in times of trial.

May their home be filled with prayer,
hospitality, and compassion,
so that all who enter it may encounter
warmth, healing, and hope.

Bless them with the gift of children,
that they may lovingly welcome new life,
raise their family in faith and goodness,
and hand on to future generations the beauty of faithful love.

And after a long and blessed life together,
may they come with all the saints
to the eternal wedding feast of heaven.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
who said to Your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins, but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with Your will.

Teach us also to become instruments of peace within our homes,
listening with patience and loving one another
with gentle and attentive hearts.

Who live and reign for ever and ever.

Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who opens hearts through His presence
and nourishes love through the gift of Himself.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Love does not always arrive with dramatic words.
Sometimes it appears in quiet understanding,
patient listening, gentle forgiveness, and faithful presence.

Today Christ has entered this marriage through the Eucharist.
May this couple always remember
that when noise overwhelms them,
when burdens grow heavy,
and when words become difficult, God still waits in the silence —
whispering peace, renewal, and love.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at the table of Your Son,
we ask You, O Lord,
to strengthen this newly married couple
with the grace of attentive love and enduring peace.

May they continue to seek You
in prayerful silence, mutual understanding, and faithful presence,
and may their home become a living witness
to the quiet strength of Christian marriage.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May He teach you to hear His voice in moments of silence and prayer.

May He strengthen you to remain patient, attentive, and faithful to one another all the days of your life.

May your home become a refuge of peace for all who enter it.

And may Almighty God bless you,
the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by living with attentive hearts,
gentle words, and faithful love.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“The deepest love is not always found in grand words, but in the quiet presence of two hearts that truly listen.”

44. The Cross and the Crown in Married Life

Romans 8:31–39; Luke 9:23–25

Theme: “The Cross and the Crown: Married Love That Endures, Sacrifices, and Triumphs in Christ.”

INTRODUCTION

In 1936, during the construction of the Golden Gate Bridge, a worker slipped and fell from the steel beams high above the sea. Everyone expected tragedy. But beneath the bridge, engineers had installed a massive safety net. The man survived. Later, workers testified that because of that net, they worked with greater courage, confidence, and peace. They knew that even if they stumbled, something beneath them would hold them.

Marriage is beautiful, but it is also costly. Every marriage eventually carries crosses: misunderstandings, sacrifices, disappointments, sickness, financial burdens, moments of loneliness, and seasons of waiting. Yet Christian marriage is never a walk over empty space. Beneath every cross stands the everlasting love of Christ. Saint Paul reminds us today: “Nothing can separate us from the love of God.” And Jesus tells us that true life is found not in avoiding the cross, but in carrying it with love.

As we gather around this altar for this sacred celebration, we acknowledge that there are times when we have resisted sacrifice, avoided love’s demands, or failed to trust God in difficult moments. Let us therefore ask the Lord for mercy and strength as we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You carried the Cross out of love and revealed that sacrifice is the path to glory: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, You remain faithful when human strength fails and fear overwhelms the heart: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You crown with eternal joy those who persevere in love and trust in You: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God have mercy on us,
strengthen us in every trial,
teach us to carry one another in love,
forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

COLLECT

O God,
who revealed in Your Son
that love becomes victorious through sacrifice,
grant that these your servants,
united today in the covenant of Marriage,
may remain faithful in times of joy and trial,
carry one another's burdens with courage,
and discover in every cross
the promise of resurrection and peace.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,
who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

HOMILY

A firefighter once entered a burning house to rescue an elderly woman trapped inside. When he finally reached her, he discovered that she refused to leave without a small framed photograph resting beside her bed. Confused, he grabbed the picture and carried both the woman and the frame outside. Later he asked why that photograph mattered so much. The woman smiled through tears and said, "That was my wedding picture. For fifty years, whenever life burned around us, we looked at that photo and remembered the promises we made."

That is the heart of today's Gospel. Jesus does not hide the truth about love. He says plainly: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me." The world often speaks about love as a feeling. Jesus speaks about love as a decision. Feelings rise and fall. Decisions endure.

Marriage always carries both a cross and a crown.

The cross is not punishment. The cross is what happens whenever love chooses sacrifice over selfishness. Every husband and wife eventually discover this truth. Love means waking up tired to care for one another. Love means forgiving after painful words. Love means standing beside each other through sickness, uncertainty, disappointment, aging, and grief. Real love always costs something.

A young husband once worked two jobs while caring for his wife during chemotherapy. Someone asked him how he survived those exhausting years. He answered quietly, "When we married, I promised to love her in difficult times too. Those vows became real when life became hard." That man understood the Gospel better than many theologians.

Saint Paul today gives one of the greatest assurances in all Scripture: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” He lists suffering, distress, persecution, hunger, danger — and then declares that none of these can separate us from the love of Christ. Notice carefully: Paul does not say suffering will disappear. He says suffering will not have the final word.

That is the crown.

The crown is the quiet victory that grows from faithful love. The crown is the peace of knowing that someone stayed. The crown is trust built slowly over years. The crown is the joy of children raised in faith. The crown is two people discovering that their marriage became stronger precisely because they carried crosses together instead of running away from them.

There is an old story about a violin maker in Italy. One day someone noticed deep cracks in a violin hanging in his workshop and asked why he kept such a damaged instrument. The old craftsman replied, “Because the wood that has suffered produces the deepest music.” That is also true of marriage. Couples who have walked through pain together often love with greater tenderness, wisdom, patience, and depth.

Dear bride and groom, today you stand before the altar dressed beautifully, surrounded by joy. But the sacrament you receive today is not merely for bright days. It is for dark days too. One day one of you will be weak, and the other will need to be strong. One day one of you will doubt, and the other must continue believing. One day there may be tears no one else sees. On that day, remember this Gospel. The cross carried together becomes lighter because Christ carries it with you.

And never forget: every cross carried with Christ already contains the seed of resurrection.

A man married for sixty years was once asked the secret of his marriage. He answered: “Every morning I asked God for two things — strength to carry the cross of love, and gratitude to recognize its crown.” That is Christian marriage. Not perfect people, but faithful people. Not a life without wounds, but a love that refuses to walk away.

And at the end of life, the greatest crown will not be wealth, success, or comfort. It will be this: that two people helped each other reach heaven.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Brothers and sisters, trusting that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, let us bring before God our prayers for the Church, the world, and this newly married couple.

1. For the Church, that she may continue to proclaim with courage that faithful and sacrificial love reflects the love of Christ for His people, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
2. For married couples throughout the world, that they may remain steadfast through every cross and discover the joy that grows from faithful love, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
3. For this bride and groom, that Christ may strengthen them in moments of sacrifice, deepen their joy in times of blessing, and keep them united in enduring love, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
4. For families burdened by suffering, illness, financial hardship, or broken relationships, that God may grant them healing,

perseverance, and peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

5. For all who have died, especially married couples who faithfully carried the vocation of love through life's trials, that they may receive the crown of eternal life, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Father of mercy and strength,
hear the prayers we offer with confidence and love.
Teach us to follow Christ faithfully through every cross,
until we share fully in the joy of His eternal kingdom.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters,
that this sacrifice, offered in thanksgiving
for the gift of faithful love
and for the strength to carry life's crosses together,
may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give You thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in Your wisdom You created man and woman in love
and called them to become one heart and one life.
In Christ Your Son,
You revealed that love reaches its fullness through sacrifice,

for He carried the Cross for the salvation of the world
and transformed suffering into the path of glory.

Through the Sacrament of Marriage
You strengthen husbands and wives
to remain faithful in times of joy and trial,
to carry one another with patience and tenderness,
and to become living witnesses
that no suffering can overcome love rooted in You.

And so, with the Angels and Saints,
we praise You, as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,
we dare to say the prayer that gives strength to weary hearts
and hope to those who carry the cross of love together:

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for this bride and groom,
who come today before God's altar,
that He may graciously bless them
and make their love fruitful and enduring.

Holy Father,
Creator of the whole world,
who made man and woman in Your image
and willed that their union be crowned with blessing,
look with kindness upon these newlyweds.

Pour out upon them the grace of the Holy Spirit,
so that they may remain faithful in love,

patient in suffering,
steadfast in trials,
and joyful in hope.

When burdens become heavy,
strengthen them to carry one another with tenderness.
When they encounter the crosses of life,
let them never lose sight of the crown promised to those who
persevere in love.

Bless their home with peace and prayer.
Grant that they may be blessed with children,
and become loving parents who guide their family in faith, wisdom,
and compassion.

May they grow old together with grateful hearts,
surrounded by true friends and the support of Your people,
and after a lifetime of faithful love,
welcome them into the eternal wedding feast of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, who said to Your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins, but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with Your will.
Strengthen all married couples to remain united
when life becomes difficult,
and teach them to transform every cross
into an opportunity for deeper love.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold Him who strengthens us to carry the cross with love
and leads us toward the crown of eternal life.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Love becomes holy not because life is easy,
but because hearts remain faithful through every season.
Today Christ has entered this marriage with His own life and grace.
The same Lord who carried the Cross now walks beside this couple,
strengthening them to love when love becomes difficult,
to hope when burdens arise,
and to discover that every sacrifice offered with love
becomes a seed of joy and resurrection.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at this sacred table,
we pray, O Lord,
that these holy mysteries may strengthen this newly married couple
to remain faithful through every joy and sorrow,
to carry one another in charity and patience,
and to grow daily in the love of Christ,
who reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the eternal Father keep you united in faithful love and grant you peace in your home.

Amen.

May Christ the Lord, who carried the Cross and entered into glory, strengthen you in every trial and fill your hearts with enduring hope.

Amen.

May the Holy Spirit deepen your love, bless your family with joy, and guide you safely toward the eternal crown prepared for those who love faithfully.

Amen.

And may almighty God bless all of you, the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by lives of faithful love, carrying one another's burdens with courage, and walking always toward the crown that Christ has prepared for you.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“Marriage is not the absence of crosses, but the decision to carry them together until they become a crown.”

45. Marriage as Participation in God's Creative Love

Genesis 1:27–28; John 15:1–8

Theme: “Rooted in Christ, Bearing the Fruit of God's Creative Love.”

INTRODUCTION

In a small village in Italy, there stands a vineyard planted more than a hundred years ago by a young newlywed couple. During wars, droughts, and economic collapse, almost every crop around it failed. Yet that vineyard survived generation after generation. When experts finally studied it, they discovered something remarkable: beneath the surface, the roots of the vines had intertwined so deeply that they were sharing water and strength with one another underground. The vineyard endured because no vine lived for itself alone.

Today, dear friends, marriage is not simply about two people standing beside each other. It is about two lives becoming rooted together in God's love so deeply that they begin to give life beyond themselves. In Genesis, God creates man and woman in His image and blesses them with the power to love creatively, fruitfully, and faithfully. In the Gospel, Jesus says: “I am the vine, you are the branches.” A marriage separated from Christ dries out; a marriage rooted in Him bears fruit that blesses the world.

But we also know that at times we have chosen selfishness instead of communion, impatience instead of tenderness, fear instead of trust. Therefore, before we celebrate this sacred covenant of love, let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord to prune our hearts so that we may bear lasting fruit.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You created man and woman in the image of Your faithful love: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, You are the true vine who nourishes every marriage with grace and life: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You call us to bear fruits of love that will remain forever: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins,
prune away all that keeps us from abiding in His love,
heal what is wounded within us,
strengthen us to bear fruits of faithfulness and joy,
and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT

O God,
who created man and woman in Your image
and planted within their hearts the power to love fruitfully and
faithfully,
look kindly upon Your servants gathered here today.
Root their marriage deeply in Christ, the true Vine,
so that united in grace, patience, sacrifice, and joy,
they may bear lasting fruits for one another, for their family, and for
the world.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

HOMILY

A few years ago, after a violent storm in California, people noticed something strange in a forest. Massive trees had remained standing while smaller ones had fallen. Scientists explained why: the surviving trees had roots that had grown intertwined beneath the earth for decades. During the storm, they literally held one another upright.

That is one of the most beautiful images of marriage.

Because marriage is not merely standing beside someone when the sun is shining. Marriage is learning how to hold each other upright when storms arrive.

And storms will come.

Genesis tells us that man and woman are created in the image of God. That means something extraordinary: every authentic marriage reflects something of God Himself. God creates, gives life, sustains, forgives, renews, and remains faithful. Married love is meant to participate in that same divine creativity. Not only in bringing children into the world, but also in creating hope, healing, kindness, stability, forgiveness, and joy wherever the couple lives.

The world often thinks creativity belongs only to artists, musicians, or inventors. But some of the greatest acts of creation happen quietly inside homes.

A husband comes home exhausted but still listens patiently to his wife.

A wife forgives words spoken in frustration.

Two people continue loving each other after disappointment.

Parents wake in the middle of the night for a crying child.

A couple chooses fidelity when temptation whispers otherwise.

That too is creation.

That too brings life into the world.

Jesus says in today's Gospel: "I am the vine, you are the branches." Notice He does not say, "Try harder alone." He says, "Remain in me."

Because disconnected branches cannot survive.

There is an old story about a famous violin maker in Cremona, Italy. A young apprentice once asked him, "What is the secret of making a violin that lasts for centuries?" The old master replied, "The wood must remain close to the fire long enough for every hidden weakness to appear." Only then could it become strong enough to make beautiful music.

Marriage works the same way.

Love matures not during perfect moments but through fire: misunderstandings, sacrifices, tears, illnesses, financial pressures, disappointments, and waiting. Yet couples who remain close to Christ during those moments discover that grace can turn weakness into music.

And here is the mystery many people miss: God prunes the branches He loves.

Pruning sounds painful because it is painful. Sometimes God cuts away pride. Sometimes He removes selfish habits. Sometimes He teaches patience through delays, humility through failures, tenderness through suffering. But pruning is never destruction. It is preparation for greater fruit.

There is another story told of an elderly couple married for over sixty years. A reporter once asked them, "What kept your marriage alive

for so long?" The old woman smiled and said, "We belonged to a generation where if something was broken, we repaired it instead of throwing it away."

That sentence contains wisdom our generation desperately needs.

A fruitful marriage is not a perfect marriage. It is a repaired marriage. Again and again. With grace. With humility. With forgiveness.

Dear couple, today you are not simply promising to stay together. Today you are allowing God to plant a vineyard through your lives. People will one day rest in the shade of your love. Children may learn faith through your example. Friends may rediscover hope because of your fidelity. Your home can become a place where wounded hearts heal and weary souls breathe again.

But only if you remain connected to the Vine.

Pray together.

Forgive quickly.

Speak blessings more than criticisms.

Protect your tenderness.

Never let success become more important than presence.

Because the greatest tragedy is not a difficult marriage. The greatest tragedy is a marriage that slowly becomes spiritually disconnected.

A branch separated from the vine still looks alive for a while. But eventually it dries from the inside.

Do not let that happen.

Remain in Christ during success and failure, during laughter and grief, during youth and old age. And if you do, your marriage will bear fruit long after your hair turns grey.

There is a beautiful tradition in parts of Greece. When vineyards become old and weak, farmers sometimes place fresh soil around the roots instead of cutting the vines down. Months later, the vineyard begins producing grapes again.

That is how God loves us.

Even when love grows tired, He does not abandon us. He surrounds us again with grace.

And that is why Christian marriage is ultimately a story of hope: because the God who created love is also the God who renews it.

So today, as you stand before this altar, remember this:

A marriage rooted in Christ does not merely survive. It becomes a place where heaven quietly touches earth.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Rooted in Christ, the true Vine, let us bring our prayers before God the Father, trusting that He will help us bear fruits of lasting love and faithful service.

1. For the Church, that she may continue to nurture families in faith, hope, and charity, helping the world rediscover the beauty of faithful love, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
2. For this newly married couple, that their home may become a vineyard of grace where forgiveness, tenderness, prayer, and joy flourish abundantly, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
3. For married couples experiencing trials, loneliness, or wounded relationships, that Christ the true Vine may restore their strength and renew their love, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

4. For children and future generations, that they may grow surrounded by examples of faithful love, moral courage, and deep compassion, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For all gathered here, that we may remain deeply rooted in Christ and bear fruits of kindness, justice, mercy, and peace in our daily lives, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Father of all love, You created us in Your image and called us to bear lasting fruit.
Hear the prayers we place before You today and strengthen us always in Christ our Lord.
Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice, offered in thanksgiving for God's creative and faithful love revealed in this marriage, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give You thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For You created man and woman in Your image and planted within their hearts the vocation to love faithfully and fruitfully.
In Christ, the true Vine,
You reveal that love finds its fullness not in self-seeking, but in communion, sacrifice, and abiding grace.

Through the covenant of marriage
You allow human love to participate in Your own creative work,
bringing forth new life, nurturing hope, healing wounds,
and building homes where faith may flourish from generation to
generation.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of Your glory,
as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray together as God's children,
trusting the Father who nourishes every branch
that remains united to Christ.

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for this bride and groom,
who today begin their life together at God's altar,
that He may bless them abundantly in Christ.

Holy Father,
Creator of love and giver of every good gift,
pour out the grace of Your Holy Spirit upon these newlyweds.

May they remain always rooted in Christ, the true Vine,
drawing strength from prayer, fidelity, and sacrificial love.
Grant that they may support one another in times of joy and trial,

forgive one another generously,
and bear fruits of kindness, wisdom, patience, and peace.

Bless their home with laughter and understanding,
with hospitality toward the lonely,
and compassion toward those in need.

May they be blessed with children,
and become loving parents who guide their family in faith and virtue.
May their love continue to mature through every season of life,
so that together they may one day rejoice eternally in Your kingdom.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
who said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your
will.

May the peace shared today in this marriage strengthen this couple
to remain united in every season of life and become instruments of
reconciliation and tenderness in the world.

Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.
In Christ, the true Vine, we receive the life and grace
that alone can sustain faithful love
and make our lives fruitful before God.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Love grows where Christ remains.

Today this couple has promised not merely to walk together,
but to remain rooted together in the Lord.

Like branches united to the vine,
may their marriage draw daily strength from prayer,
forgiveness, and grace.

The Eucharist they have received is not only a sign of God's love—
it is the very nourishment
that will sustain their covenant through every season of life.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at the table of Your Son,
we thank You, Lord,
for nourishing us with the Bread of Life.
Strengthen this newly married couple in unity and peace,
so that remaining firmly rooted in Christ,
they may bear fruits of faithful love,
generous service, and lasting joy.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you firmly rooted in His love.
Amen.

May He strengthen your marriage through every joy and every trial,
and make your home fruitful in faith, hope, and charity. **Amen.**

May He bless you with peace of heart, generosity of spirit, and the
grace to remain always united in Christ. **Amen.**

And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by the faithfulness of your love,
and remain always united to Christ, the true Vine.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“Marriage flourishes not because two people never struggle,
but because they remain rooted in Christ,
who gives life, healing,
and lasting fruit to every branch that stays close to Him.”

46. Respect and Reverence Between Spouses

Ephesians 5:21; Matthew 7:12

Theme: “Love That Reveres: Marriage Built on Mutual Respect, Sacred Dignity, and the Golden Rule.”

INTRODUCTION

In Japan there is an ancient art called *Kintsugi*. When a precious bowl breaks, the artist does not hide the cracks with glue. Instead, the broken lines are filled with gold. The fracture is not covered in shame; it is honoured. The message is profound: what is precious is treated with reverence, even in its weakness.

That is exactly what Christian marriage is meant to be. Not merely romance, not merely living together, but learning to treat another human soul as sacred. Saint Paul says today, “Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ.” And Jesus gives the Golden Rule: “Do to others whatever you would have them do to you.” Marriage survives not because couples never hurt one another, but because they never stop honouring one another’s dignity.

Yet we all know that impatience, pride, harsh words, neglect, and selfishness can wound even the people we love most. Therefore, before we celebrate this sacred covenant, let us ask the Lord for mercy and for hearts capable of reverence, tenderness, and respect.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You teach us to honour one another as children of God:
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You call husbands and wives to mutual love, respect, and sacrifice: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You heal the wounds caused by careless words and hardened hearts: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us for the times we failed to reverence one another,
for the words that wounded instead of healed,
for moments of selfishness, pride, and impatience,
and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

COLLECT

O God,
who teach us that true love is patient, humble, and full of reverence,
look kindly upon your servants who come before your altar today.
Grant that their marriage may reflect the love of Christ:
a love that listens deeply, honours faithfully, forgives generously,
and treats each other always with sacred dignity.
May their home become a place of peace, tenderness, and joy for all
who enter it.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

HOMILY

In 1994, after Nelson Mandela became President of South Africa, he invited to a meal one of the prison guards who had once humiliated him during his years in jail. During the meal, the guard trembled silently, unable to eat. Mandela later explained: “He thought I would take revenge. But respect breaks chains that hatred cannot.”

That is the power of reverence.

It changes history.

It heals wounds.

It restores dignity.

And that is what today’s readings are really about.

Many people misunderstand Saint Paul’s words in Ephesians because they focus on only one line. But the heart of the passage is this:

“Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Marriage is not about domination. It is not about who wins arguments or who gets the final word. Christian marriage is about two people kneeling before the dignity of the other. It is about learning to say: “Your soul matters to me. Your tears matter to me. Your dreams matter to me. Your fears matter to me.”

Respect is one of the deepest forms of love.

Flowers die. Beauty changes. Emotions rise and fall. But reverence sustains love when emotions become exhausted.

A husband may provide a beautiful house, but if he speaks with contempt, the house becomes cold. A wife may prepare every meal with care, but if criticism poisons the atmosphere, the table becomes heavy. Love grows where respect lives.

There is an old story about an elderly couple married for over sixty years. Someone asked the husband, “How did your marriage last so long?”

The old man smiled and answered:

“We came from a generation that repaired things instead of replacing them.”

That is wisdom.

Today’s world often treats relationships as disposable. One misunderstanding, one disappointment, one imperfection—and people walk away. But sacred love does not discard people. It honours them even in weakness.

That is why the Japanese art of *Kintsugi* is so beautiful. The cracks are filled with gold because what is broken is still precious. In marriage, there will be misunderstandings, failures, bad days, moments of silence, and tears. But reverence means saying: “Even when you are wounded, you are still sacred to me.”

And then Jesus gives us the simplest and hardest commandment of all:

“Do to others whatever you would have them do to you.”

Imagine if every married couple truly lived just that one sentence.

Speak the way you wish to be spoken to.

Listen the way you wish to be heard.

Forgive the way you hope to be forgiven.

Protect the dignity of your spouse the way you want your own dignity protected.

One harsh sentence can remain in a heart for years. One act of tenderness can heal years of pain.

There is another story of a woman who kept a small handwritten note hidden inside her Bible for forty years. After she died, her children found it. It contained only one sentence written by her husband shortly after their wedding:

“I promise never to speak to you in a way that makes you feel small.”

That promise became the foundation of their marriage.

Dear couple, never underestimate the holiness of ordinary respect:

saying thank you,
listening attentively,
protecting each other in public,
speaking gently when angry,
apologizing sincerely,
remaining faithful in thought and action,
and refusing to humiliate one another.

These are not small things.

These are sacred things.

Because every act of reverence toward your spouse is ultimately reverence toward Christ Himself.

And perhaps one day, many years from now, when your hair has turned grey and your steps have become slower, people may ask the secret of your marriage. May your answer be simple:

“We never stopped treating each other as a gift from God.”

In Japan, broken pottery is repaired with gold.

In Christian marriage, imperfect people are held together by reverence.

And that kind of love becomes more beautiful precisely because it has survived the cracks.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Mindful that God calls every marriage to reflect mutual respect, tenderness, and sacred dignity, let us now bring our prayers before Him.

1. For the Church, that she may continue to teach the beauty of faithful, respectful, and self-giving love, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

2. For this newly married couple, that they may always speak with kindness, forgive with humility, and honour one another as sacred gifts from God, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

3. For married couples who are struggling with hurt, silence, or misunderstanding, that God may heal their wounds and restore reverence within their homes, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

4. For families and friends gathered here today, that their example and encouragement may help sustain this couple in faithfulness and joy, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For all who feel unloved, disrespected, or forgotten, that they may encounter people who restore their dignity and remind them of their worth before God, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father,

You have shown us in Christ the perfect love
that honours and uplifts.

Hear the prayers we place before You today,
and help us to live always with reverence toward one another.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice, offered for a love built on reverence, tenderness, and faithful respect, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in your wisdom and love
you created man and woman in your image
and called them to become one heart and one soul.
In the covenant of marriage
you teach them to honour one another with patience, humility, and
tenderness,
so that their love may become a living sign
of Christ's faithful love for His Church.

Through moments of joy and difficulty,
you remain their strength and companion,
filling their home with grace
and teaching them that true greatness is found
not in power, but in reverence and self-giving love.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching, let us pray to the Father who teaches us to treat one another with the same mercy, dignity, and love we ourselves hope to receive.

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for this bride and groom,
who come today to begin their married life at God's holy altar.

Holy Father,
creator of love and source of every blessing,
pour out your grace upon these newlyweds.
Teach them to reverence one another in joy and in sorrow,
to speak with kindness,
to forgive without delay,
and to protect each other's dignity all the days of their lives.

May their home be filled with peace, laughter, patience, and prayer.
When trials come, strengthen them with unity;
when success comes, keep them humble and grateful;
when wounds appear, help them repair them with the gold of mercy
and tenderness.

Bless them with the gift of children,
that they may lovingly welcome new life
and raise their family in wisdom, faith, and compassion.

May their love grow deeper with the passing years,
until one day they rejoice together in the eternal wedding feast of
heaven.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
who said to your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.
Teach us also to preserve peace within our homes
through mutual respect, gentle speech, and humble hearts.
Who live and reign for ever and ever.
Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

This is Jesus Christ, who teaches us to love with reverence,
to forgive with humility,
and to honour one another as sacred in God's eyes.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Real love is revealed not only in grand moments, but in ordinary
gestures:
a patient answer,
a listening ear,
a hand held during difficult days,
an apology sincerely given,
a dignity carefully protected.

Today Christ has entered this marriage through the Eucharist.
May He remain at the centre of this home, teaching this couple every
day how to love not only deeply, but reverently.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at this heavenly table,
we ask you, Lord,
to strengthen this newly married couple in unity and peace.
May the Body and Blood of Christ teach them to honour one another
with faithful hearts, gentle words, and enduring compassion,
so that their marriage may become a sign of your love in the world.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May He teach you to speak with kindness,
to listen with patience,
and to cherish one another with reverence and joy.

May He strengthen your love in times of trial,
fill your home with peace,
and bless your family with lasting unity and happiness.

And may almighty God bless all of you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by honouring one another with love,
dignity, and reverence.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“The secret of a lasting marriage is not finding a perfect person,
but never stopping to treat an imperfect person
as a sacred gift from God.”

47. Choosing Love Every Day

Deut 30:15–20; Jn 21:15–17

Theme: “Love Is a Daily Choice: Choosing One Another as Christ Chooses Us.”

INTRODUCTION

In 1994, during the genocide in Rwanda, a husband and wife hid for weeks in a tiny dark bathroom together with several others. There was almost no food, no certainty of survival, and fear sat beside them every night. Years later, when the wife was asked what kept her alive, she did not speak first about courage or hope. She said: “Every morning my husband looked at me as if he were choosing me again. In that darkness, that look became life.” Sometimes love is not proven in grand gestures, but in quiet daily decisions: *I stay. I forgive. I choose you again.*

Today’s readings speak exactly about that kind of love. Moses stands before Israel and says: “I have set before you life and death... choose life.” And in the Gospel, Jesus asks Peter three times, “Do you love me?” Love in Scripture is never merely emotion; it is a decision renewed again and again. Marriage is not built only on the excitement of a wedding day, but on thousands of hidden choices made afterward — choices to remain faithful, patient, tender, truthful, and merciful.

And yet, all of us know that there are days when we have chosen selfishness instead of love, pride instead of humility, silence instead of understanding. Therefore, before we celebrate this sacred covenant, let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord for mercy and strength to choose love again.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You call us each day to choose life, faithfulness, and love: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, You asked Peter not whether he was perfect, but whether he loved You: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You remain faithful even when our love grows weak: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God, who never ceases to call us back to love, forgive us for the times we have failed to choose patience, mercy, and faithfulness; strengthen our hearts to walk always in His ways, and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

COLLECT

O God,
who teach us that true love is renewed each day
through fidelity, sacrifice, and grace,
look kindly upon your servants gathered here today
as they begin their life as husband and wife.
Grant them hearts that continually choose one another
in moments of joy and in seasons of trial,
so that their marriage may become
a living reflection of Christ’s faithful love for His Church.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, forever and ever.

Amen.

HOMILY

In 2007, a newspaper published the story of an elderly man who visited his wife in a nursing home every single morning at exactly 8:00 a.m. One day a nurse asked him, "Why do you come so early every day? Your wife no longer remembers who you are." The old man smiled gently and replied, "Yes... but I still remember who she is."

That is love.

Not butterflies.

Not convenience.

Not romance only when life is easy.

Real love is memory with commitment.

It is the daily decision to remain faithful even when emotions fluctuate and circumstances change.

That is why today's readings are so powerful.

In the First Reading, Moses stands before the people and says: "*I have set before you life and death... choose life.*" Notice that God does not force love. Love must be chosen. Every day. Again and again.

And in the Gospel, Jesus asks Peter three times: "*Do you love me?*" Jesus does not ask Peter: "Will you never fail again?" He already knows Peter's weakness. Peter had denied Him three times. Yet Jesus still entrusts him with love and responsibility. Why? Because authentic love is not the absence of weakness; it is the courage to return, to begin again, and to keep choosing.

Marriage works exactly that way.

Today, this couple stands before the altar full of joy. But years from now, love will become less about flowers and photographs and more about choices hidden from the world. Choosing patience after an argument. Choosing tenderness when tired. Choosing forgiveness when wounded. Choosing presence when life becomes busy.

A young wife once asked her grandmother, "Grandma, what is the secret to staying married for sixty years?" The grandmother answered: "We belonged to a generation that repaired things instead of replacing them."

That wisdom is disappearing in many places today. We live in a culture that quickly throws away relationships when they become difficult. But Christian marriage says something radically different: *Love stays. Love repairs. Love fights for communion.*

And this is why Jesus questions Peter three times. Each question heals one denial. Christ does not shame Peter; He restores him. In marriage too, there will be moments requiring restoration. There will be words regretted, misunderstandings, disappointments, and wounds. But the strength of marriage is not that problems never come; the strength is that two people continue choosing each other even after imperfection is revealed.

There is a beautiful story about a man whose wife developed Alzheimer's disease. Every day she forgot his name. Every day she asked, "Who are you?" And every day he answered, "I'm your husband, and I love you." Someone asked him, "Why do you keep doing this when she does not even remember?" He answered: "Because love is not based on what she remembers. It is based on what I promised."

That is covenant love.

And that is exactly how God loves us.

God does not wake up one morning and decide to stop loving humanity. Even after betrayal, sin, and failure, God keeps saying: "Choose life. Return to Me. Begin again."

Dear couple, today you are not promising merely to feel love forever. Feelings rise and fall. Today you are promising something greater: that every morning of your lives, you will choose one another again.

Some days that choice will feel effortless. Other days it will feel heroic.

But remember this: the strongest marriages are not those without storms. The strongest marriages are those where, after every storm, two people still reach for each other's hands.

And perhaps one day, many years from now, when age has changed your faces and time has slowed your steps, someone may ask you the secret of your marriage. May your answer simply be:

"Every day, we chose love again."

And that is how ordinary human love becomes holy.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

My dear brothers and sisters,
God continually invites us to choose life and love. Trusting in His mercy and faithfulness, let us now bring before Him our prayers.

1. For the Church, that she may continue to proclaim to the world the sacred dignity of faithful and lifelong love, let us pray to the Lord.
Lord, hear our prayer.

2. For N. and N., that every day of their married life they may choose patience over anger, forgiveness over resentment, and tenderness over indifference, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

3. For married couples who are struggling, wounded, or discouraged, that Christ may restore their love as He restored Peter after his failure, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

4. For families throughout the world, that homes may become places where love is renewed daily through prayer, sacrifice, and understanding, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For all who have died, especially loved ones who taught us the meaning of faithful love, that they may rejoice forever in the wedding feast of heaven, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Father of mercy and love,

You never cease calling us to choose life and communion.

Hear the prayers we place before You today,

and strengthen us always to walk in Your ways.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters,

that this sacrifice,

offered with grateful hearts for the gift of faithful and enduring love, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give You thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For You created man and woman in Your image
and planted within the human heart
the capacity to love faithfully and selflessly.
In marriage You reveal that love is not merely spoken once,
but chosen daily through sacrifice, tenderness, and fidelity.

In Your Son, Jesus Christ,
You showed us the fullness of covenant love.
Even after Peter's denial,
Christ continued to call him, trust him, and love him.
So too You sustain married couples with grace
to begin again after weakness,
to forgive after wounds,
and to remain faithful in every season of life.

Through this sacred union,
You make visible in the world
the steadfast love with which You love Your people.
And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of Your glory,
as without end we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command
and formed by divine teaching,
we dare to say the prayer that teaches us daily trust,
daily forgiveness, and daily love:

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for this bride and groom,
who come to the altar as they begin their married life,
that by His grace they may always remain united in faithful love.

Holy Father,
maker of the whole world,
who created man and woman in Your own image
and willed that their union be crowned with Your blessing,
look with kindness upon these your servants.

Pour out upon them the grace of the Holy Spirit,
that they may choose one another each day
with patient hearts, generous love, and enduring fidelity.
When joy fills their home, let them be grateful;
when trials come, let them remain steadfast;
when weakness appears, let them quickly forgive.

May their marriage become a refuge of peace,
a school of compassion,
and a witness to the faithful love of Christ.

Bless them with the gift of children,
that they may lovingly welcome new life
and guide their family in wisdom and faith.

Grant that, after a lifetime of mutual love and service,
they may come with all the saints
to the eternal wedding feast of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
You said to Your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.
Look not on our sins, but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with Your will.
Teach us each day to choose reconciliation over division, tenderness
over pride, and faithful love over selfishness.
Who live and reign forever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold Him who takes away the sins of the world.
In this Eucharist, Christ strengthens us to love faithfully
and to choose one another daily with generous hearts.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Love becomes holy not in one extraordinary moment,
but in thousands of ordinary choices.
Today Christ has nourished us with His own faithful love.
May this couple always remember
that the secret of a lasting marriage is not perfection,
but the courage to choose one another again and again,
just as God continually chooses us.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at the table of Your heavenly banquet,
we pray, O Lord,
that this sacrament of perfect love
may strengthen these newlyweds in fidelity and peace.
Teach them to renew each day
the promises they make before Your altar today,
so that their home may shine with patience,
forgiveness, joy, and steadfast love.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May He strengthen you always to choose love over selfishness,
forgiveness over resentment, and hope over discouragement.
May He fill your home with peace, your hearts with fidelity,
and your future with joy and the gift of life.
And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by the daily love you choose to live.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“A strong marriage is not built by one perfect moment of love,
but by countless ordinary moments
in which two people quietly choose each other again.”

48. Marriage as a School of Virtue

Gal 5:22–23; Mt 5:1–12

Theme: “Marriage as a School of Virtue: Learning the Beatitudes Through Love.”

INTRODUCTION

A teacher once asked her students, “Where do people learn patience?” One child answered, “At school.” Another said, “At work.” But an elderly woman quietly replied, “At home. Especially in marriage.” The room fell silent because everyone knew she was right. Marriage is not simply a place where two people live together; it is a place where two souls are slowly shaped. There, kindness is tested, patience stretched, forgiveness repeated, humility learned, and love purified.

The Beatitudes that Jesus proclaims today are not abstract ideals framed on church walls. “Blessed are the meek... blessed are the merciful... blessed are the peacemakers...” — these become real in the ordinary moments of married life: in waiting for one another, apologizing after wounds, sacrificing quietly, remaining faithful when life becomes difficult. And Saint Paul reminds us that such virtues are not manufactured by human strength alone; they are fruits of the Holy Spirit growing within hearts surrendered to God.

Today, as this couple stands before the altar, they do not come because they are already perfect in virtue. They come because they desire to let God shape their marriage into a lifelong school of holiness. And so, before we celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge the moments when we have resisted the Spirit, failed in love, and neglected the virtues that lead to true happiness.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You call us to be merciful and gentle in heart:
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You teach us that true greatness is found in humility and service: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You fill faithful hearts with the fruits of the Holy Spirit:
Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God, who calls us to holiness through patience, mercy, purity of heart, and faithful love, forgive us our sins, heal what is wounded within us, strengthen us with the grace of His Spirit, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT

O God, who teach us through Your Son that true blessedness is found in humility, mercy, purity of heart, and peace, pour out the grace of the Holy Spirit upon this bride and groom, that their marriage may become a living school of virtue, where love is patient, joy is enduring, and faithfulness bears lasting fruit. Grant that, strengthened by Your presence, they may grow together in holiness and become a sign of Your goodness in the world. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

HOMILY

In the ruins of World War II, a journalist once visited a small village in France that had been almost completely destroyed. Homes were burned. Streets were shattered. Families had lost everything. Yet in the middle of the village stood one house still filled with warmth and laughter. Curious, the journalist asked the elderly couple living there, “How did your marriage survive all this?”

The old husband smiled and answered, “Every morning we asked not whether we still loved each other, but whether we were still willing to become better for each other.”

That is the heart of Christian marriage.

Marriage is not only a romance to be enjoyed; it is a school where souls are formed. It is one of God’s greatest classrooms for virtue. The world often says marriage exists to make people happy. Jesus says marriage exists to make people holy — and holiness leads to the deepest happiness.

The Beatitudes are not poetry detached from life. They are the curriculum of love.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.” In marriage this means learning not to let pride rule the relationship. Pride destroys love quietly. A husband may win an argument and lose his wife’s heart. A wife may insist on being right and slowly wound the unity between them. But humility keeps love alive.

A young priest once asked an elderly man married for sixty years, “What is the secret of your marriage?” The old man answered, “Twice a day I swallowed my pride before breakfast.” That is holiness in ordinary clothes.

“Blessed are the merciful.” Mercy becomes essential in marriage because no one marries a perfect person. At some point promises will be tested by disappointment, exhaustion, misunderstandings, and wounds. The happiest marriages are not the ones without failures, but the ones where forgiveness is stronger than failure.

There is a beautiful story of a woman caring for her husband who had Alzheimer’s disease. Every day he forgot her name. Every day he asked who she was. Someone once asked her, “Why do you keep doing this when he no longer remembers you?” She answered, “Because I remember him.” That is mercy. That is covenant love.

Saint Paul speaks today about the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Notice that these are fruits, not achievements. Fruit grows slowly. Virtue grows slowly too. A vineyard is not cultivated in one day, and neither is a marriage.

Many couples begin marriage thinking love is proven in dramatic moments. But most holiness grows quietly: preparing meals when tired, listening when busy, staying faithful during difficult seasons, speaking gently after a hard day, praying together even after disagreements. Heaven is often prepared in kitchens, hospital rooms, dining tables, and silent acts of sacrifice.

“Blessed are the peacemakers.” Peace in marriage does not mean the absence of conflict. Peace means choosing love over ego. It means learning that silence can sometimes heal more than harsh words.

An old grandmother once told her granddaughter on her wedding day: “When you are angry, lower your voice. When you are hurt,

guard your words. And when you are loved, never take it for granted.” That is wisdom shaped by years of covenant life.

Dear bride and groom, today you stand before this altar full of joy and hope. But God is giving you something greater than a beautiful wedding day. He is giving you a path toward holiness. Through each season of life, your marriage will become a classroom where God teaches you patience, gentleness, perseverance, mercy, and faithful love.

And one day, years from now, people may not remember the flowers, the music, or even this ceremony. But they will remember whether your home became a place of peace, kindness, forgiveness, and joy. They will remember whether your marriage made people believe that love is still sacred.

A nurse once spoke about an old married couple in a hospital. The wife was dying. Her husband sat beside her holding her hand in silence. After many hours, she opened her eyes weakly and whispered, “Did we do it right?”

The old man began to cry and answered, “We kept loving. That was enough.”

And perhaps, at the end of every Christian marriage, that is what truly matters before God: not perfection, not wealth, not success — but whether two people allowed the Holy Spirit to transform ordinary love into holy love.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in God, who fills faithful hearts with the fruits of the Holy Spirit, let us bring before Him our prayers for this couple, for the Church, and for the world.

1. For the Church, that she may continue to teach the world that true happiness is found in mercy, humility, purity of heart, and peace, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

2. For this bride and groom, that their marriage may become a lifelong school of virtue where patience, forgiveness, faithfulness, and joy flourish daily, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

3. For married couples experiencing struggles, misunderstandings, or sorrow, that the Holy Spirit may restore peace, tenderness, and hope within their homes, let us pray to the Lord.
Lord, hear our prayer.

4. For parents, teachers, and all who shape the hearts of the young, that they may witness to lives of integrity, compassion, and selfless love, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For our departed loved ones and for all who have modelled faithful and virtuous love throughout their lives, that they may rejoice forever in the kingdom of heaven, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Father of all goodness,
You teach us through Your Son the way of true blessedness.
Hear the prayers we offer today and fill this couple
with the grace to bear lasting fruits of holiness and love.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice,
offered for a marriage rooted in faith, mercy, patience, and peace,
may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give You thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in Your wisdom and love
You have called man and woman
to walk together in covenant fidelity,
so that through the joys and trials of marriage
they may grow in holiness
and bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

In the Beatitudes proclaimed by Your Son,
You reveal the beauty of humble and merciful love,
a love that seeks peace, forgives generously,
and remains faithful through every season of life.
Through the sacrament of Matrimony
You make the home a place where virtue is learned,
hearts are purified,
and Your grace quietly transforms ordinary life
into a path toward heaven.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of Your glory,
as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray with confidence to the Father,
asking that this couple may grow daily in mercy, peace, faithfulness,
and all the virtues that lead to true blessedness.

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord
for this bride and groom,
who come to the altar at the beginning of their married life,
that through His grace
their love may grow in holiness and virtue.

Holy Father,
maker of the whole world,
who created man and woman in Your image
and willed that their union be crowned with Your blessing,
look kindly upon this bride and groom joined today in the sacrament
of Matrimony.

Pour out upon them the grace of the Holy Spirit,
that they may be patient in trials,
gentle in speech,
merciful in weakness,
faithful in commitment,
and steadfast in love.

May their home become a place of peace and joy,
where kindness is freely given,
forgiveness quickly offered,
and prayer faithfully shared.

Grant that they may support one another all the days of their lives,
grow old together in mutual trust,
and be witnesses of Christian virtue to all who know them.

Bless them with the gift of children,
that they may lovingly raise them in faith and wisdom
and hand on the light of the Gospel to future generations.

And after a lifetime of faithful love,
may they come with all the saints
to the eternal wedding feast of heaven.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
who said to Your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins, but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with Your will.
Teach us also to become peacemakers in our homes,
patient in trials and merciful in weakness,
so that our relationships may reflect the gentleness of Your heart.
Who live and reign for ever and ever.

Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold Him who teaches us the way of mercy, humility, and peace.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Love becomes holy not in extraordinary moments alone,
but in daily fidelity.
The Eucharist we have received is the food of patient love,
forgiving love, enduring love.
May this couple remember that every act of kindness,
every sacrifice made in silence,
every moment of mercy shared between them
becomes a quiet step toward heaven.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at the table of Your heavenly banquet,
we humbly ask You, Lord,
to strengthen this bride and groom
with the grace of unity and peace.
May the Body and Blood of Christ
help them to grow in patience, gentleness, and faithful love,
so that their marriage may bear lasting fruits of holiness
for the good of the Church and the world.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you in His peace.
May He make your home a dwelling place of kindness, mercy, and
joy.
May He strengthen you in times of trial, deepen your faithfulness in
love, and fill your hearts with the fruits of the Holy Spirit.
May Almighty God bless you,
the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by lives of mercy, faithfulness, and love.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“A holy marriage is not built in one great moment of love, but in thousands of small moments where two people choose patience, mercy, humility, and faithfulness again and again.”

49. The Spirituality of Ordinary Family Life

Col 3:17; Lk 2:51–52

Theme: “Holiness Hidden in Ordinary Days”

Marriage is not made holy only by extraordinary sacrifices or dramatic moments, but by the quiet spirituality of everyday family life: shared meals, patient listening, daily work, forgiveness, prayer, and faithful presence. In the hidden life of Nazareth, Jesus sanctified ordinary living, teaching us that God often enters not through spectacle, but through simple love faithfully lived.

INTRODUCTION

There is an old story about a woman who once complained to a spiritual director: “My life feels too ordinary to be holy. I spend my days cooking, cleaning, paying bills, caring for children, and repeating the same routine.” The old priest quietly handed her a small mirror and said, “Go home and place this where you wash dishes.” Weeks later she returned, changed. “Every time I looked into that mirror,” she said, “I remembered that holiness was standing there in an apron.” The greatest danger in life is not that our days are ordinary; the greatest danger is forgetting that God lives inside ordinary days.

Today’s readings reveal exactly this mystery. Saint Paul tells us: “Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord.” And in the Gospel, Jesus spends most of His earthly life not preaching to crowds, but quietly growing within a family in Nazareth. The hidden years of Jesus remind us that family life itself can become a sanctuary where love, patience, sacrifice, and tenderness become prayers pleasing to God.

But we also know that ordinary life can exhaust us. We sometimes fail to see God in the routines, burdens, misunderstandings, and imperfections of home life. Therefore, before we celebrate this

sacred marriage, let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord to renew our hearts and make our homes places where His presence dwells.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You sanctified the ordinary life of the home in Nazareth:
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You teach us that love is shown in small daily acts of patience and sacrifice: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You call our families to become places of peace, forgiveness, and holiness: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us for the times we failed to recognize His presence
in the ordinary moments of life,
for the times impatience wounded love
and routine weakened gratitude,
and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT

O God, who revealed the beauty of holy family life
through the hidden years of Your Son in Nazareth,
grant that these your servants,
united today in the Sacrament of Matrimony,
may discover Your presence in the ordinary rhythms of daily life,
and through patience, tenderness, faithful work, and enduring love,
become for one another signs of Your grace and peace.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,
who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

HOMILY

A traveller once visited an ancient cathedral in Europe. He expected to be overwhelmed by the towering ceilings and golden altars. But what captured him most was a small unnoticed carving hidden beneath a wooden pew. It showed a mother holding a child while kneading bread. Underneath were the words: *“God is here too.”*

That may be one of the greatest lessons marriage must learn.

Many people think holiness happens only in dramatic moments — in miracles, pilgrimages, heroic sacrifices, or extraordinary acts of faith. But today’s Gospel quietly destroys that illusion. The Son of God spent most of His earthly life not healing crowds or preaching sermons, but living quietly inside an ordinary family. For nearly thirty years, heaven looked like a simple home in Nazareth.

Jesus grew up in routine. There were meals to prepare, floors to sweep, tools to repair, neighbours to greet, tired evenings, ordinary conversations, and silent sacrifices nobody applauded. And yet Scripture says: *“Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favour before God and man.”* Holiness was growing inside ordinary life.

That is deeply important for marriage.

Because after today’s celebration fades, after the photographs are framed and the flowers disappear, married life will become beautifully ordinary. There will be laundry, work schedules, bills, fatigue, misunderstandings, crying children, moments of silence, and days that seem repetitive. And the temptation will come to believe that spirituality exists somewhere else — anywhere except there.

But Saint Paul says today: *“Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord.”* Not only the big moments. Everything.

A husband making coffee early in the morning for his exhausted wife can become holy.

A wife listening patiently after a difficult day can become holy. Parents waking in the middle of the night for a sick child can become holy.

Even small acts — saying “thank you,” apologizing first, eating together without distractions, praying before sleep — these become bricks that slowly build a holy home.

There is a moving story about an elderly couple married for over sixty years. Someone once asked the husband, “What kept your marriage strong?” He smiled and answered, “Every morning my wife made toast for breakfast. Some days it was perfect. Some days it was burned. But I learned early that love grows stronger when you stop counting imperfections.” That is spirituality in ordinary life: choosing love in repeated small moments.

The world often celebrates grand achievements, but heaven notices hidden faithfulness.

One of the saddest realities today is that many families live in the same house but not truly together. Devices speak louder than conversations. Schedules replace presence. People share rooms but not hearts. Yet the Holy Family teaches us that holiness begins with presence. Jesus was not raised in luxury or fame. He was raised in availability, simplicity, and love.

And this is where marriage becomes sacred vocation. Your home is not meant to be merely a place where you sleep. It is meant to

become a sanctuary where people feel safe, heard, forgiven, and loved.

There is another story of a little boy who once drew a picture of God in school. His teacher said, “But nobody knows what God looks like.” The child replied, “They will when I finish.” Married couples unknowingly do the same thing every day. Through the way they speak, forgive, sacrifice, and remain faithful, they draw a picture of God for the world to see.

Dear couple, your greatest witness may never be something dramatic. It may simply be the way you continue choosing each other on ordinary Tuesdays. The way you remain gentle during stress. The way you keep praying even when tired. The way your future children may one day look at your marriage and understand what faithful love looks like.

And perhaps that is the deepest beauty of Nazareth: God saved the world not only through the Cross, but also through thirty hidden years of ordinary family life.

Before He preached in temples, Jesus sanctified the kitchen table. Before He calmed storms, He lived through ordinary days. Before He carried the Cross, He carried the quiet rhythm of family life.

And because of that, every loving home can become holy ground.

A few years before she died, an elderly mother was asked what her greatest achievement in life had been. She answered softly: “Nothing the world would notice. I just tried every day to make my home a place where love could breathe.” That is holiness. That is Nazareth. That is the spirituality of ordinary family life.

And perhaps tonight, heaven will look upon this marriage not asking whether life will become extraordinary, but whether love will remain faithful in ordinary days — because that is where God so often waits.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered in joy around this marriage covenant, let us pray to God our Father, who reveals His presence in the ordinary moments of family life.

1. For the Church, that she may continue to strengthen families to become homes of prayer, tenderness, forgiveness, and faithful love, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

2. For this newly married couple, that their daily life together may reflect the peace, simplicity, and holiness of Nazareth, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

3. For married couples facing burdens, misunderstandings, or fatigue, that they may rediscover God's grace hidden within ordinary acts of love and sacrifice, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

4. For children and future generations, that homes may become places where faith is lived sincerely and love is learned gently, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For our departed loved ones who taught us the beauty of faithful family life through quiet sacrifice and devotion, that they may dwell forever in God's eternal home, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Father of love, You made the home of Nazareth holy by Your presence. Hear these prayers and help us recognize You in the ordinary moments of life. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that this sacrifice, together with the daily sacrifices of love, patience, and fidelity that build every holy family, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give You thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in the hidden life of Nazareth
You revealed the holiness of ordinary family life,
teaching us that love is formed not only in great moments,
but also in quiet acts of service, patience, and fidelity.

In the covenant of marriage
You call husband and wife
to become signs of Your faithful love,
building homes where peace may dwell,
where children may grow in wisdom and grace,
and where daily life itself becomes an offering pleasing to You.

And so, with the Angels and Saints,
we praise You, as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray with confidence to the Father
who desires every home to become a place where love,
forgiveness, and daily faithfulness flourish.

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters,
let us humbly pray to the Lord for this bride and groom,
who come today to begin their life together,
that He may bless them with His grace and make their home a
reflection of Nazareth.

Holy Father, creator of all goodness,
You made man and woman to walk together in love
and blessed family life through the hidden years of Your Son.

Look with kindness upon these newly married spouses.
Grant that they may discover Your presence
in the ordinary rhythms of each day.
May their home be filled with patience in difficulty,
joy in simplicity, faithfulness in trials,
and gratitude in abundance.

Teach them to recognize holiness
in small acts of tenderness and sacrifice.
May they speak words that heal,
offer forgiveness quickly,
and never allow routine to weaken love.

Bless them with the gift of children,
that they may lovingly welcome them,
raise them in faith and wisdom,
and help them grow in the knowledge of Your love.

And after a lifetime of shared faith and enduring devotion,
bring them with their family
to the eternal banquet of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
who said to Your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins, but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with Your
will.

May this newly formed family become a home where peace is
protected in difficult moments, where forgiveness is stronger than
pride, and where Your presence is recognized in everyday life.
Who live and reign forever and ever.

Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold Him who sanctifies even the ordinary moments of human life
and calls us to become one in love and faithfulness.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Holiness rarely announces itself with noise.
More often it enters quietly —
through shared meals, gentle words, patient listening,
tired sacrifices, and faithful presence.
The Eucharist we have received now
enters the ordinary reality of this marriage.
May this couple remember
that every day lived in love can become sacred,
and every home centred on Christ can become another Nazareth.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at the table of Your Son,
we ask You, Lord,
to strengthen this newly married couple
in all the ordinary moments that will shape their life together.
May this sacrament nourish in them patience,
joy, fidelity, and enduring love,
so that their home may always reflect Your presence and peace.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless your home with peace.
May He strengthen you in moments of weariness,
deepen your love through ordinary days,
and help you recognize His presence in every season of life.
May your family become a place where faith is lived sincerely,
where forgiveness is freely given,
and where love never grows tired.
And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace,
glorifying the Lord by the holiness of your ordinary daily life.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“Extraordinary marriages are not built by extraordinary moments alone, but by ordinary days filled with faithful love.”

50. Gratitude as the Secret of Happy Marriages

1 Thess 5:16–18; Lk 17:11–19

Theme: “Thankfulness: The Hidden Language of Lasting Love”

INTRODUCTION

There is an old story about a husband who, after forty years of marriage, was asked what kept his marriage alive. People expected him to speak about sacrifice, patience, or romance. Instead, he quietly said, “Every night before sleeping, I thanked God for one thing about my wife. Some nights it was something big. Some nights it was simply that she was still beside me.” Gratitude changed the way he looked at her. What we constantly thank God for, we stop taking for granted.

In today’s Gospel, ten lepers were healed, but only one returned to say thank you. Jesus notices not only the miracle of healing but the absence of gratitude. Gratitude is never a small matter in the eyes of God because gratitude keeps the heart awake. In marriage too, love does not usually die from one great wound; often it fades through unnoticed blessings, unspoken appreciation, and forgotten kindness.

Today, as N. and N. come before the altar, they remind us that a joyful marriage is not built only on grand promises but on daily gratitude — gratitude for presence, forgiveness, sacrifice, fidelity, and the gift of sharing life together. Yet there are times we have failed to appreciate God and one another. Therefore, let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord for mercy and healing.

PENITENTIAL ACT WITH KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You teach us that grateful hearts remain close to You:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You call husbands and wives to recognize each other as gifts and blessings: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You remain faithful even when we forget to give thanks:

Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God,
who never ceases to bless us with gifts beyond counting,
forgive us for the times we have taken His love
and one another for granted,
heal our wounded hearts,
deepen within us the grace of gratitude,
and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT

O God, source of every blessing
and faithful giver of all good things,
look with kindness upon your servants N. and N.,
who today begin their married life before your altar.
Teach them to recognize one another each day
as gifts received from your loving hand,
so that gratitude may strengthen their love,
patience sustain their trials,
and joy fill their home with peace.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

HOMILY

A woman once visited an elderly priest shortly after her husband had died. She said something unforgettable: “Father, I miss him terribly, but I have one consolation — I never saved my love for later.” She explained that every morning she thanked him for something: for working hard, for making coffee, for fixing broken things, for simply listening. “When he died,” she said through tears, “there were no unspoken thank-you left in my heart.”

That is the power of gratitude. Gratitude is love spoken aloud.

The Gospel today is painful in a subtle way. Ten lepers were healed. Ten received mercy. Ten got their lives back. But only one returned. Imagine Jesus watching the empty road, waiting for the others. The tragedy is not only ingratitude toward God; it is the blindness that forgets grace once the blessing is received.

And that danger exists in every marriage.

At the beginning of love, everything feels extraordinary. The messages are treasured. The smiles are noticed. Every meeting feels like a gift. But over time, familiarity can quietly replace wonder. The person once thanked for simply existing becomes expected, assumed, overlooked.

A husband leaves early every morning for work. A wife quietly carries burdens nobody notices. Meals appear. Bills get paid. Sacrifices are made. Tears are hidden. Forgiveness is offered. Years pass. And sometimes the greatest hunger in a marriage is not for luxury or excitement — it is the hunger to feel appreciated.

There is a Jewish saying: “What is taken for granted will eventually be taken away.” Gratitude protects love from becoming ordinary.

St. Paul tells us today: “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances.” Notice he does not say give thanks *for* all circumstances, but *in* all circumstances. Marriage will have seasons of abundance and seasons of drought. There will be days of dancing and days of silence. Gratitude does not deny suffering; it discovers grace even within it.

A man once kept a small notebook during fifty years of marriage. After his death, his children discovered what was inside. Every page contained one sentence beginning with the words: “Today I thank God for your mother because...” Thousands of lines filled that notebook. Some profound, some simple:

“...because she stayed awake when our child was sick.”

“...because she still laughs at my old jokes.”

“...because she held my hand at the hospital.”

That notebook became a history not of perfection, but of attention. Gratitude taught him to keep seeing his wife as a gift.

N. and N., never stop noticing each other.

Thank each other for ordinary things. Thank each other for hidden sacrifices. Thank each other after arguments and after forgiveness. Thank each other for loyalty during difficult years. One day your marriage will not be remembered because it was perfect, but because you continued seeing grace in one another.

And gratitude changes more than marriages; it changes souls.

The grateful spouse becomes less proud because gratitude recognizes dependence. The grateful spouse becomes gentler because gratitude notices goodness. The grateful spouse becomes faithful because gratitude remembers blessings during difficult moments.

There is another story of an elderly couple eating at a small restaurant. The husband cut his pie in half and placed the larger piece on his wife’s plate. The waitress smiled and asked, “After all these years, what is your secret?” The old man answered, “We never stopped competing in kindness.”

That is holiness in married life.

Not dramatic perfection. Not constant emotion. But two people trying every day not to outdo each other in winning arguments, but in gratitude, tenderness, and generosity.

Today at this altar, N. and N. will exchange vows. But if these vows are to survive the years ahead, gratitude must become part of their daily spirituality. Because where gratitude disappears, entitlement grows. And where entitlement grows, love suffocates.

But where gratitude lives, love breathes again.

A nurse once cared for a dying man married for sixty-three years. On his final night, he whispered to his wife, “Thank you for walking me home.” Not “thank you for a perfect life,” because no marriage is perfect. But thank you for staying, forgiving, enduring, laughing, praying, and loving.

Perhaps that is the deepest definition of marriage: two imperfect people spending a lifetime thanking God for each other.

And maybe one day, after many years, N. and N. will look at one another with wrinkled hands and tired eyes and realize that the greatest miracle was not wealth, success, or comfort — but that they never stopped returning to each other with grateful hearts.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Celebrating God's goodness revealed in the love of N. and N., let us now bring before the Lord our prayers with grateful hearts.

1. For the Church, that she may always proclaim gratitude as the path to joy and holiness, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

2. For N. and N., that they may never take one another for granted, but daily recognize each other as gifts entrusted to them by God, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

3. For married couples who struggle with disappointment, silence, or wounded relationships, that gratitude and forgiveness may heal their hearts, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

4. For families throughout the world, that homes may become places where appreciation is spoken freely, kindness is remembered, and love is strengthened, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

5. For our departed loved ones, especially married couples who reflected God's faithful love during their lives, that they may rejoice forever in God's eternal kingdom, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Father of all goodness,
receive the prayers we place before You today.

Teach us always to recognize Your blessings
and to live with thankful hearts.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters,
that this sacrifice of gratitude and love,
offered for N. and N. on their wedding day,
may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in your wisdom and love
you created man and woman
to be companions on life's journey,
so that through mutual love, fidelity, and gratitude
they might reveal the tenderness of your own heart.

In the Sacrament of Matrimony
you teach husbands and wives
to recognize each other not as possessions to be claimed
but as gifts to be cherished.

Through daily acts of patience, sacrifice, and thanksgiving,
their love becomes a living sign
of Christ's faithful love for His Church.

And so, with the Angels and Saints,
we praise you, as without end we acclaim:

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

At the Savior's command and formed by divine teaching,
let us pray with grateful hearts to the Father
who gives us every good gift:

NUPTIAL BLESSING

Dear brothers and sisters, let us humbly pray to the Lord for these newly married spouses, N. and N., that He may graciously pour out upon them the blessing of His love.

Holy Father, creator of all things, you made man and woman in your image and blessed their union with your love. Look kindly upon N. and N., who today begin their married life in Christ.

Grant that they may always recognize one another as gifts received from your loving hand.

May gratitude fill their home with joy, patience strengthen them in trials, and forgiveness renew them when they fall.

Teach them never to take for granted the love they now promise before your altar, but to cherish one another in tenderness and fidelity all the days of their lives.

Bless them with the gift of children, that they may lovingly welcome new life, raise their children in faith and goodness, and become witnesses of your compassion in the world.

May their home be a place of prayer, peace, and joyful thanksgiving, so that after a long and blessed life together, they may come with all the saints to the eternal wedding feast of heaven. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will.

Teach us to protect with gratitude the people we love, so that our homes may become places of reconciliation, tenderness, and lasting peace.

Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. In this Eucharist we receive the greatest gift of divine love, the Lord who teaches us to live with grateful hearts. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Love survives not only through great moments, but through remembered blessings. Today Christ has fed us with Himself, the eternal gift of the Father. May N. and N. learn from this altar to nourish one another daily with gratitude, tenderness, forgiveness, and faithfulness. For hearts that remain thankful rarely grow far apart.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having shared at your table, O Lord,
we thank you for nourishing us
with the Bread of life and love.

Strengthen N. and N. in the covenant they have begun today,
that with grateful hearts they may persevere in fidelity,
support one another in every season of life,
and reflect your goodness to all they meet.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May He teach you always to recognize His gifts in one another.
May gratitude protect your love in difficult times,
and may joy fill your home in days of peace.

May He bless your work, your family, and your future children.
May your marriage become a witness
that faithful and thankful love still changes the world.

And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by lives filled with gratitude, fidelity,
and love.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

A happy marriage is not built by finding a perfect person,
but by never ceasing to thank God
for the imperfect person you chose to love.