

WORLD MARRIAGE SUNDAY – FEBRUARY 09, 2025

THEME: MARRIAGE: A VOCATION OF HOPE LIVED IN HUMILITY

READINGS: Isaiah 6: 1-2a, 3-8
1 Cor 15: 1-11
Luke 5: 1-11

INTRODUCTION:

Dear friends, today on the fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, we observe World Marriage Sunday. The liturgy invites us to reflect on 'Marriage, as a vocation of hope lived in humility.' Let us join together to pray for all married couples - those who are filled with love, those struggling to love and even those who have fallen out of love, as well as those who have lost their spouses. May Jesus in this Eucharist nourish all of them with hope as he showers HIS blessings.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE HOMILY:

On the wedding day, a couple experiences a whirlwind of thoughts and emotions. Of course, while love and affection for each other is primary, there is also joy, excitement and anticipation on the one hand, and nervousness, fear and anxiety on the other. Those to be married stand before the altar as "Pilgrims of hope" with deep humility in their hearts, ready to embark on a pilgrimage of commitment, growth and gratitude as they pray for God's valuable blessings on their covenant.

The three protagonists in our readings and Gospel today, Isaiah, St Paul and St Peter find themselves unworthy to be able to respond to the call to serve God and His mission. The unworthiness stems from awareness of their own limitations, or the situation they are called to address or due to the challenges they face to perform the task, and thereby asking themselves whether they will be able to do justice to the mission entrusted to them.

In response to Isaiah's expression of inadequacy, he receives the singe of a hot coal from the angel that surely sparks him into action. St Paul is convinced that even though he is the last in the list of persons to have been blessed with an appearance from the risen Lord, he feels empowered to preach the Good News like the others. St Peter who witnesses to the miraculous catch of fish surrenders his unworthiness to the Lord who empowers him to be the leader of the team of apostles.

Pope Francis specially addresses all of you in his 'Bull of Indiction - **Spes non confundit**' where he encourages us to be people filled with hope. Finding hope in God's grace, he calls us to be signs of hope. He admonishes us to recognize the immense goodness present in our world, lest we be tempted to think ourselves as overwhelmed by evil and

violence. He invites us to be tangible signs of hope for our brothers and sisters who experience hardships of any kind. As members of a synodal Church, we recognise and appreciate the role of married couples in guiding the "domestic church" of their family, in safeguarding the sacrament of Matrimony even in these challenging times and nurturing vocations to married life and to priesthood.

In our congregation today, we recognise the presence of many couples, some married recently, some for decades, some having celebrated silver and golden anniversaries. We also acknowledge the presence of couples who are struggling in their relationship with each other, couples who are challenged with financial difficulties, couples who are separated or whose marriages are annulled, as well as spouses who have lost their partners. We appreciate your contribution to Church life in the families and communities to which you belong, because you are seen as beacons of hope to one another as well to everyone whom you encounter.

We must always remember that we are not perfect, that we have our inadequacies but we come together to celebrate the perfection of God's love. We must be humble enough to recognise our failings and imperfections and surrender our unworthiness and our relationships to God in Jesus Christ who makes miracles happen. He multiplies love in those who are committed and faithful to each other, and he strengthens those struggling with the death of their spouses or challenged by a breakdown in their relationships.

Prayer is expected to be an important ingredient in your life as a couple which gives you the opportunity to communicate to God your struggles and your imperfections as you share your joys and hopes. In the words of the psalmist, we must always appreciate and be grateful to God and to each other, never taking the relationship for granted. And just like St Peter in the Gospel we must be ready to place all our trust in God and in one another to witness to the wonderful miracles taking place thanks to God's compassion.

In the Jubilee year, as we entrust those who are married and those struggling to remain married to God's mercy and the intercession of Mary, whose presence at Cana led to a generous miracle. Let us pray that as they journey together as "Pilgrims of hope", they may always witness to God's love, mercy and generosity.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL:

CELEBRANT: We come together as "Pilgrims of hope", surrendering our needs and intentions to God who calls us to serve Him. Our response is: **HEAR OUR PRAYER, O LORD**

1. For our Holy Father, Bishops, Priests, Religious and the lay faithful; that we may celebrate synodality in the Church in journeying together as Pilgrims of hope... We pray...

2. For government officials; that they may support and promote healthy family values in the service they render to the people entrusted to their care... We pray...
3. For all married couples, young and aged; that as beacons of hope they may reflect God's love in protecting the sanctity of marriage and finding joy in their children... We pray...
4. For those who have lost their spouses; that they may be grateful for the love shared with the spouse and be healed of the grief they experience as they serve others in similar situations... We pray...
5. For those struggling with difficult unions, or have been separated or wounded; that their experiences may make them better and not bitter individuals and those couples struggling with finances may find timely help... We pray...

CELEBRANT: Almighty and eternal God, we thank you with a deep sense of gratitude for the gift of love visible in marriage and for listening to our prayers. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(The Liturgy has been prepared by Fr Albano Fernandes, Director, Diocesan Family Service Centre, Archdiocese of Goa and Daman)