

Marriage is the key foundation for a happy, healthy society, says bishop



Ahead of National Marriage Week, celebrated from 7-14 February, Bishop Bosco MacDonald has said that marriage is a vital building block for a flourishing society.

In a message for the week, Bishop MacDonald, the Lead Bishop for Marriage and Family Life, said we should all be working towards a society that values marriage.

“We can offer our contribution towards a culture that respects and values marriage, knowing that it’s the foundation for a happy and healthy society,” he said. “National Marriage Week is a time for all of us to think about this special sacrament and how it can change lives. It’s a chance for married couples to strengthen their bond by being kind to each other, talking openly, and sharing experiences.

“And for all of us, as we celebrate the beauty of marriage this week, let’s make sure that we support and encourage couples in their journey.”

In December 2024, UK charity Marriage Foundation found that just over half of all Gen Z men and women, 57%, will ever marry (those born in 1997 or afterwards). This is why we must speak up for marriage and uphold the theme of the week – ‘Hope in Marriage’.

Bishop MacDonald said that in a time of division, happy and functioning marriages can be an encouraging sign of God’s love:

“As we mark National Marriage Week 2025, these resources aim to help us to think about the huge importance of marriage in our lives and society.

“In a world that can be confusing and divided, hope shines brightly especially in this Jubilee Year. And the hope of marriage is that it becomes a source of stability and happiness, showing us the endless love that God has for all of us.”

Bishop MacDonald explained what makes a Christian marriage special, and why it is much more than just a ‘legal agreement’:

“For Christians, marriage isn’t just a legal agreement, it’s a special promise between husband and wife, like the covenant between God and humanity.

“And God’s promises are always fruitful. Pope Benedict XVI once said, ‘Marriage is a way to save ourselves and our society’, because marriage is a source of hope, strength, and new beginnings for everyone involved.” (Source: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/marriage-week/>)

Into the Deep



Simon Peter, the fisherman, is the first to be called personally by Jesus in Luke’s Gospel. His calling resembles Isaiah’s commissioning in the First Reading: confronted with the holiness of the Lord, both Peter and Isaiah are overwhelmed by a sense of their own sinfulness and inadequacy. Yet each experiences the Lord’s forgiveness and is sent to preach the good news of His mercy to the world.

No one is “fit to be called an apostle,” Paul recognizes in today’s Epistle. But by “the grace of God,” even a persecutor of the Church—as Paul once was—can be lifted up for the Lord’s service.

In the Old Testament, humanity was unfit for the divine—no man could stand in God’s presence and live (see Exodus 33:20). But in Jesus, we’re made able to speak with Him face-to-face, to taste His Word on our tongue.

Today’s scene from Isaiah is recalled in every Mass. Before reading the Gospel, the priest silently asks God to cleanse his lips that he might worthily proclaim His Word.

God’s Word comes to us as it came to Peter, Paul, Isaiah, and today’s Psalmist—as a personal call to leave everything and follow Him, to surrender our weaknesses in order to be filled with His strength.

Simon put out into deep waters even though, as a professional fisherman, he knew it would be foolhardy to expect to catch anything. In humbling himself before the Lord’s command, he was exalted—his nets filled to overflowing; later, as Paul tells us, he will become the first to see the risen Lord.

Jesus has made us worthy to receive Him in the company of angels in God’s holy Temple. On our knees like Peter, with the humility of David in today’s Psalm, we thank Him with all our hearts and join in the unending hymn that Isaiah heard around God’s altar: “Holy, holy, holy . . .” (see also Revelation 4:8).

Scott Hann



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5TH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME YEAR C

Entrance Antiphon: Ps 94:6-7

O Come, let us worship God and bow low before the God who made us, for he is the Lord our God.

First Reading: Isaiah 6:1-2, 3-8

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 138

In the presence of the angels I praise you, O Lord.

Second Reading: Corinthians 15:1-11

Gospel Acclamation: Mt 4:19

Alleluia, alleluia!

Follow me, says the Lord,
and I will make you fishers of men.
Alleluia!

Gospel: Luke 5:1-11

Communion Antiphon: Ps 106:8-9
Let them thank the Lord for his mercy, his wonders for the children of men for he satisfies the thirsty soul, and the hungry he fills with good things.

SATURDAY 8th February ... St Jerome Emiliani, St Josephine Bakhita

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... **Confessions after Mass**

4:30 pm Adoration and confession before Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:00 pm Vigil Mass St John Wallingford ... Kevin Deane RIP (Ian and Gay Bosley)

5:50 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

6:30 pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Anne Furlong’s intention

SUNDAY 9th February

9:00 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Logan’s 9th birthday thanksgiving (Izabela, Keira & Grandma)

11:00 am Mass St John Wallingford ... Josephine Moran RIP (Cathy Redman)

MONDAY 10th February ... NO MASS ... St Scholastica

TUESDAY 11th February ... Our Lady of Lourdes

12:00 noon Mass St John Wallingford ... Thanksgiving of Fernando Yepez’s health (Cristina Yepez)

WEDNESDAY 12th February

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Stanley Pereira RIP (Sonia & family)

THURSDAY 13th February

9:30 am Mass St John Wallingford

FRIDAY 14th February ... St Cyril & St Methodius

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... John Lythgoe RIP

SATURDAY 15th February ... Our Lady on Saturday

9:30 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... **Confessions after Mass**

4:30 pm Adoration and confession before Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:00 pm Vigil Mass St John Wallingford

5:50 pm Adoration before Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot

6:30 pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs Didcot ... Sonia Fernandes & Jorge Valente RIP

SUNDAY 16th February

9:00 am Mass English Martyrs Didcot

11:00 am Mass St John Wallingford

In your prayers, please remember: Anne O'Brien, Jenny Evans, Mary Guinan, Ann Tomline, Joan Walker, Joan Russell, Joan Turner, Nina Oakes, Jacob Oakes, Pat McLoughlin, Barry Molloy, David Woodley, Annie Furlong and all the sick and housebound of our churches.



Church Parking

This is a gentle reminder that parking in the front of the church should be reserved for parishioners with mobility difficulties at all times. You are kindly advised to park on the field car park if you are not or you do not carry passengers with mobility difficulties. This applies especially during our weekend masses with a larger amount of attendees. Thank you all for your understanding and cooperation.

Pilgrimage to Lisieux by St Swithun Wells Parish

Fr Raffaele Cossa, Parish Priest at St Swithun Wells Parish invites readers to join the parish on Pilgrimage to Lisieux from Friday 23rd to Monday 26th May. The Pilgrimage to Lisieux Friday 23rd to Monday 26th May will be led by Fr Raffaele Cossa and Fr Mario Toma from St Swithun Wells Parish and will visit the place where St Therese lived and the surrounding area. The Pilgrimage is organised with Tangney Tours and cost will be approximately £500 per person, depending on numbers, and includes

- Coach travel from St Swithun Wells parish
- Ferry crossing - Portsmouth to Caen
- 3 Nights half board - at Ermitage, Lisieux
- Visit to Alencon - birth place of St Therese

For further information and a booking form, please contact St Swithun Wells Parish Office on 023 80273882 or Clare Barkaway at Tangney Tours 01732 886666. [Image: Adobe Stock].



Pilgrimage to Westport, Knock & Co. Mayo

Are you interested in joining an escorted pilgrimage tour in this Jubilee Year? Knock Pilgrimages <https://www.knockpilgrimages.com>, a pilgrimage tour company in Ireland is organising a tour to Westport, Knock & Co Mayo on 10th March 2025. The price for the tour is £799.00 pps. Price includes flight, 10kg hold luggage, 4 nights in 4* Castlecourt Hotel, Westport with Dinner, Bed & Breakfast. Lunch is included on three days. All entertainment, excursions and transport are included. Places to visit include Knock, Galway City, Kylemore Abbey, Croagh Patrick, Ballintubber Abbey, and Quiet Man Museum. Single supplement on Enquiry. Please contact 01268 762 278 or 07740 175557 or email knockpilgrimages@gmail.com.



Pope Francis: Suffering becomes 'occasion for transformative encounter' with God

Pope Francis emphasized how suffering can become "an occasion for a transformative encounter" with God in a new message released Monday, describing three distinct ways the divine draws close to those experiencing illness and hardship. In his message for the 2025 World Day of the Sick — signed 14th Jan at the Archbasilica of St. John Lateran — the pontiff pointed to presence, gift, and sharing as profound paths of providential companionship during times of trial.

He also addressed all those "who are ill or who care for the suffering," telling them: "Your journey together is a sign for everyone: 'a hymn to human dignity, a song of hope.'" The 88-year-old pope wrote from personal experience, having faced several health challenges in recent years, including knee problems requiring a wheelchair, respiratory infections, and, most recently, a fall resulting in a forearm contusion. "In times of illness, we sense our human frailty on the physical, psychological, and spiritual levels," the pope wrote. "Yet we also experience the closeness and compassion of God, who, in Jesus, shared in our human suffering."

The pope points out that the first way of being close to God is through presence, noting that suffering "becomes an occasion for a transformative encounter, the discovery of a solid rock to which we can hold fast amid the tempests of life."

Addressing the second aspect — gift — the pope cited Venerable Madeleine Delbr el, emphasizing that hope comes primarily from the Lord as "a gift to be received and cultivated."

In the message released Monday, the pope explained that the third dimension of divine closeness manifests through sharing, particularly in health care settings where mutual enrichment often occurs between patients, medical staff, and family members.

The pope concluded his message with a special word of gratitude to health care workers and those who care for the sick, calling their shared journey "a hymn to human dignity, a song of hope." He entrusted all who are ill to the intercession of Mary, Health of the Sick, and asked for prayers for himself. (Source: Catholic News Agency)



February Seniors' Lunch 13th February

The first Seniors' Lunch in 2025 will take place on Thursday 13th February at 12:00 pm in our Tearoom in Didcot. Please invite anyone in the parish or people you know who want to get connected and enjoy a hot meal with us. At the same time, we are still recruiting volunteers who can help in cooking the seniors' lunch, shopping for food and doing preparation for the monthly lunches to take the place of Kim and Douglas, our two most valuable chefs. Please let Ada or Jacqui know if you are available and have both time and culinary skills to share. Thank you.



Relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis, the First Millennial Saint, to Visit Cardiff-Menevia Ahead of Canonisation

The relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis, who will become the first millennial saint, will visit the Archdiocese of Cardiff-Menevia from 14 to 17 February 2025. Preparations for his canonisation by Pope Francis in Rome on 27 April 2025 are currently underway. The relic, a fragment of the membrane surrounding his heart, offers the faithful a unique opportunity to venerate this inspiring young figure who has been hailed as a patron saint for the digital age. His relic, which is kept in an ornate reliquary, will arrive at the Metropolitan Cathedral Church of St David, Cardiff, on the morning of Friday 14 February before moving on to four other locations across the Archdiocese. The visit is expected to draw thousands of pilgrims, following the success of previous visits of the relic to other Dioceses across the UK and Ireland.

Born in London in 1991 and raised in Milan, Blessed Carlo Acutis was an ordinary boy with an extraordinary love for the Eucharist. Despite his parents not being religious, he insisted on visiting churches to "say hello to Jesus," inspiring their return to faith. Passionate about technology and Catholicism, he created a website cataloguing Eucharistic miracles, believing that if people understood Christ's presence in the Eucharist, they would turn to God.

The relic will be accompanied by Monsignor Anthony Figueiredo from the Diocese of Assisi, who is responsible for bringing Blessed Carlo's Pericardium Heart Relic to different nations and sharing first-hand insights about this remarkable millennial. The schedule of the relic's visit is as follows:

Friday 14 February – Metropolitan Cathedral Church of St David, Cardiff

Mass of Welcome at 10:00am, celebrated by Archbishop Mark O'Toole, followed by veneration and opportunities for prayer, reconciliation, and reflection throughout the day.

Saturday 15 February – Belmont Abbey

Reception of the relic at 11:00am, followed by Mass, veneration, a talk on Blessed Carlo, Adoration, and reflections led by local parishes.

Sunday 16 February – St Joseph's Co-Cathedral, Swansea

Mass at 10:00am, celebrated by Archbishop Mark, with veneration, reflections, and music throughout the day. Special sessions for youth, Confirmation candidates, and First Communion children. For more information, visit <https://rcadc.org/>. (Source: cbcew.org.uk)



CAFOD Parish Volunteer Needed

Could your new year's resolution be to help promote CAFOD's fast days at English Martyrs and St John the Evangelist? We need a CAFOD Parish Volunteer to represent both English Martyrs and St John. You will represent us in the upcoming Lent Fast Day which is on Friday 14th March, and help us keep in touch with the news and activities of CAFOD. Please let Ada or Fr Dominic know if you can help. For more information, you can contact Jo Lewry from CAFOD by email jolewry@cafod.org.uk or phone 07710 094447. Your desire for a better world will help connect your community with those overseas and enable our sisters and brothers in the poorest places in the world to lift themselves out of poverty. "When people are in need, giving money is not the only way to help. With volunteering, you give your time and skills to make a difference."



Prophecy Now Conference

The Prophecy Now Conference with Damian Stayne, the founder of Cor et Lumen Christi Community will be back on 8th February at 9:00-9:30am in Chertsey Hall KT16 9DR. This conference will seek to uncover the deep mystery of why God has exalted prophecy so high in his plans for creation and the history of God's people. There is a non-refundable token registration fee of £10 to cover some of our initial expenses and reserve a place. There will be an opportunity for participants to make an offering at the conference. For more information and registration about the conference, please contact corlumenchristi@gmail.com.

