

## THE POPE IN IRELAND

■ In the afternoon of Saturday 25 August, Pope Francis visited St Mary's Pro-Cathedral, where he met 350 married and engaged couples and spoke in Italian about the importance of marriage

Good afternoon!

Dear friends,

I am pleased that we can meet in this historic Pro-Cathedral of Saint Mary's, which has seen countless celebrations of the sacrament of matrimony over the years. Looking out at you, at your youth, I ask myself: so then it isn't true what everybody says, that young people don't want to get married! Thank you. Getting married and sharing one's life is something beautiful. We have a saying in Spanish: "Sorrow shared by two is half a sorrow; joy shared by two is joy-and-a-half". That is what marriage is like.

How much love has been expressed here, and how many graces have been received in this holy place! I thank Archbishop Martin for his cordial welcome. I am especially happy to be with all of you, engaged couples and married couples at different stages on the journey of sacramental love. It is also nice to hear the beautiful music coming from over there ... the sound of babies crying! That is a sign of hope, the loveliest music, but it is also the best sermon, to hear a baby crying, because it is a cry of hope, [a sign] that life goes on, that life goes forward, that love is fruitful. Look at the babies... But I greeted an elderly person, too: we also have to look at the elderly, because the elderly are full of wisdom. Listen to what the elderly have to say, [ask them] "What was your life like?"

I liked the fact that you [turning to Vincent and Teresa, the elderly couple who were the first to speak] spoke first, after 50 years of marriage, because you have so much experience to share. The future and the past meet in the present. They – let me use the word – the "old", have wisdom. Even mothers-in-law have wisdom! [laughter] And children must listen to their wisdom, you young people ought to listen to their wisdom, and talk to them in order to keep going, because they are your roots. They are the roots and you draw from those roots in order to keep moving forward. I am going to come back to this later on, for sure, but I want to say it now, from the heart.

**AS I MENTIONED**, I am particularly grateful for the testimony of Vincent and Teresa, who spoke to us of their experience of 50 years of marriage and family life. Thank you both for your words of encouragement and challenge addressed to a new generation of newlyweds and engaged couples, not only here in Ireland but throughout the world. They are not going to be like you; they are different. But they need your experience to be different, to keep moving forward. It is so important to listen to the elderly, to our grandparents! We have much to learn from

your experience of a married life sustained daily by the grace of the sacrament.

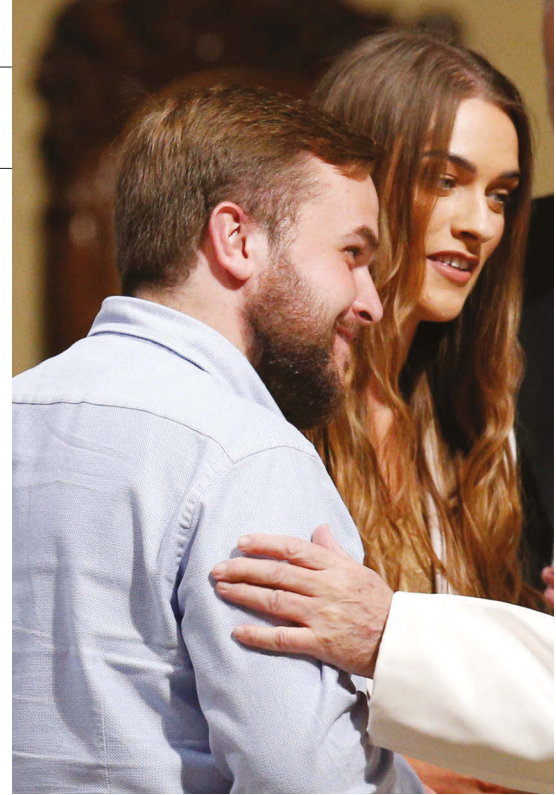
I want to ask you: did you quarrel a lot? But that is part of marriage! A marriage without arguments is pretty boring... [laughter]. Yet there is a secret: plates can even fly, but the secret is to make up before the end of the day. And to make up there is no need to talk; a caress is enough, like that, and peace returns. Do you know why this is important? Because if you do not make up before going to bed, the "cold war" of the following day is too dangerous, resentment builds up... Yes, fight all you want, but make up at night. All right? Don't forget this, you young people ...

In growing together in this "partnership of life and love", you have experienced many joys and, to be sure, not a few sorrows as well. Together with all spouses who have come far along this path, you are the keepers of our collective memory. We will always need your faith-filled witness. It is a precious resource for young couples, who look to the future with excitement and hope and, perhaps ... a touch of trepidation: what will that future be like?

**I ALSO THANK** the young couples who have asked me several forthright questions. They are not easy to answer! Denis and Sinead are about to embark on a journey of love that, in God's plan, entails a life-long commitment. They asked how they can help others to see that marriage is not simply an institution but a vocation, a life that moves forward, a conscious and life-long decision to cherish, assist and protect one another.

Surely we have to acknowledge that nowadays we are not used to anything that really lasts for the whole of our lives. We are living in a "culture of the provisional"; we are used to it. If I feel hungry or thirsty, I can eat; but my feeling of being full does not last even a day. If I have a job, I know that I might lose it against my will, or I may have to choose a different career. It is even hard to keep track of the world as it changes all around us, as people come and go in our lives, as promises are made but often broken or left unfulfilled. Perhaps what you are really asking me is something even more basic: Is there *anything* precious that endures at all? This is the question. It seems that nothing beautiful or precious lasts. "Isn't there anything precious that lasts? Even love itself?"

There is a temptation that the phrase "all the days of my life" that you will say to one another may change and, in time, die. If love does grow by more love, it doesn't last long. Those words "all the days of my life" are a commitment to make love grow, because



love has nothing of the provisional. Call it excitement, call it, I don't know, enchantment, but real love is definitive, a "you and I". As we say in my country, it is "half of the orange": you are my half of the orange and I am your half of the orange. That is what love is like: everything and every day for all the days of your life. It is easy to find ourselves caught up in the culture of the provisional, the ephemeral, and that culture strikes at the very roots of our processes of maturation, our growth in hope and love. How can we experience "what truly lasts" in this culture of the ephemeral? This is a tough question: how can we experience, in this culture of the ephemeral, what is truly lasting?

**I WOULD** say to you, of all the kinds of human fruitfulness, marriage is unique. It is about a love that gives rise to new life. It involves mutual responsibility for the transmission of God's gift of life, and it provides a stable environment in which that new life can grow and flourish. Marriage in the Church, that is, the sacrament of matrimony, shares in a special way in the mystery of God's eternal love. When a Christian man and woman enter the bond of marriage, God's grace enables them freely to promise one another an exclusive and enduring love. Their union thus becomes a sacramental sign – this is important – the sacrament of marriage becomes a sacramental sign of the new and eternal covenant between the Lord and his bride, the Church. Jesus is ever present in their midst. He sustains them throughout life in their mutual gift of self, in fidelity and in indissoluble unity (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 48). Jesus' love is, for couples, a rock and refuge in times of trial, but, more importantly, a source of constant growth in pure and enduring love. Gamble big, for your entire life! Take a risk! Because marriage is also a risk, but it is a risk worth taking. For your whole life, because that is how love is.



Pope Francis greets a recently married couple at St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral

PHOTO: CNS, PAUL HARING

the road ahead. In the Bible, God binds himself to remain faithful to his covenant, even when we grieve him or grow weak in our love. What does God say in the Bible to his people? Listen carefully: "I will never fail you nor forsake you!" (Hebrews 13:5). And you, as husbands and wives, anoint one another with those words of promise, every day for the rest of your lives. And never stop dreaming! Keep repeating in your heart: "I will never fail you or forsake you!"

Stephen and Jordan are newlyweds and they asked the very important question of how parents can pass the faith on to their children. I know that the Church here in Ireland has carefully prepared catechism programmes for teaching the faith in schools and parishes. This is, of course, essential. Yet the first and most important place for passing on the faith is the home. It is in the home that we learn to believe, through the quiet daily example of parents who love our Lord and trust in his word. There, in the home, which we can call the "domestic church", children learn the meaning of fidelity, integrity and sacrifice. They see how their mother and father interact with each other, how they care for each other and for others, how they love God and love the Church. In this way, children can breathe in the fresh air of the Gospel and learn to understand, judge and act in a manner worthy of the legacy of faith

they have received. The faith, brothers and sisters, is passed on "around the family table", at home in ordinary conversation, in the language that persevering love alone knows how to speak.

Never forget this, brothers and sisters: faith is passed on in everyday speech! The speech of the home, everyday life, life in the family. Think of the seven Maccabee brothers, how their mother spoke to them "in everyday speech", the language in which they first learned about God. It is more difficult to receive the faith – it can be done, but it is more difficult – if it has not been received in your native language, at home, in everyday speech. I am tempted to mention an experience I had as a child... If it helps, I'll tell you. I remember once – I was about five years old – I came home and there, in the dining room, I saw my mother and my father (who had come home from work just before me) kissing. I will never forget it! How beautiful! Though weary from work, he had the strength to express his love for his wife. May your children see you do the same, caressing one another, kissing one another, embracing one another. This is magnificent, because that is how they learn the everyday speech of love, and faith. This everyday speech of love.

So it is important to pray together as a family; speak of good and holy things, and

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let our Mother Mary into your life and the life of your family. Celebrate the feasts of the Christian people; let your children see what it is to celebrate a family feast. Live in deep solidarity with those who suffer and are at the edges of society, and let your children learn to do the same. Another story. I knew a lady who had three children, about seven, five and three years of age. The couple had a good marriage, they had great faith and they taught their children to help the poor, because they themselves used to help them.

Once while they were at lunch, the mother and three children (their father was at work), there was a knock on the door and the oldest one went to answer it. He came back and said: "Mum, there is a poor person who is asking for something to eat." They were eating breaded beef – which is very tasty!

[laughter] – and the mother asked the children: "What should we do?" All three replied: "Mum, give him something!" There were a few slices of beef left over, but the mother took a knife and started to take half of everyone's steak. The children protested: "No, Mum, give him one of those, not ours!" [The mother replied:] "No, you give the poor from what you have, not from what is left over!" That is how that faith-filled woman taught her

**Your children will learn from you how to live a Christian life; you will be their first teachers in the faith, handing on the faith**

children to give of their own to the poor. All these things can be done at home, when there is love, when there is faith, when everyone speaks the "everyday speech" of faith. In a word, your children will learn from you how to live a Christian life; you will be their first teachers in the faith, handing on the faith.

**THE VIRTUES** and truths the Lord teaches us are not necessarily popular in today's world – sometimes the Lord asks things that are not popular. Today's world has little use for the weak, the vulnerable and all those it deems "unproductive". The world tells us to be strong and independent, with little care for those who are alone or sad, rejected or sick, not yet born or dying. In a moment, I will go privately to meet some families facing grave challenges and real hardship, but who are being

shown love and support by the Capuchin Fathers. Our world needs a revolution of love! The tumult of our times is really one of selfishness, of personal interests... The world needs a revolution of love. Let that revolution begin with you and your families!

A few months ago, someone told me that we are losing our ability to love. Slowly but surely, we are forgetting the direct language

of a caress, the strength of tenderness. There will be no revolution of love without a revolution of tenderness! It is as if the word "tenderness" has been taken out of the dictionary. By your example, may your children be guided to become a kinder, more loving, more faith-filled generation, for the renewal of the Church and of all Irish society.

In this way, your love, which is God's gift, will sink ever deeper roots. No family can grow if it forgets its roots. Children will not grow in love if they do not learn how to converse with their grandparents. So let your love sink deep roots! Let us never forget that "all the blossoms on the tree draw life from what lies buried beneath" (F.L. Bernárdez, sonnet, *Si para recobrar lo recobrado*). Those are the words of an Argentinian poem; let me give it a little publicity!

Together with the Pope, may the families of the whole Church, represented this afternoon by couples old and young, give thanks to God for the gift of faith and the grace of Christian marriage. In turn, let us promise the Lord that we will serve the coming of his kingdom of holiness, justice and peace by our fidelity to the vows we have made, and by our steadfastness in love!

Thank you for this meeting!

And now I ask you to pray together the Prayer for the Meeting of Families. Then I will give you my blessing. And I ask you to pray for me. Don't forget! ●

## ■ After his meeting with families in the Pro-Cathedral, Pope Francis visited a day centre for homeless families run by the Capuchin Fathers

Dear brother, dear bishop, dear Capuchin brothers, and all of you, my brothers and sisters!

You said that the Capuchins are known as the Brothers of the People, close to the people, and this is true. If at times, some Capuchin community goes distant from the people of God, it falls. You are especially attuned with people of God, and indeed, with the poor. You have the grace of contemplating the wounds of Jesus in those in need, those who suffer, those who are unfortunate or destitute, or full of vices and defects. For you this is the flesh of Christ. This is your witness and the Church needs it. Thank you.

One more thing and then [turning to the poor] I will speak to you. Another thing that you said touched my heart. That you don't ask any questions. It is Jesus who comes [in the poor]. You ask no questions. You accept life as it comes, you give comfort



The Pope at the Capuchin Fathers' day centre

and, if need be, you forgive. This makes me think – as a reproof – of those priests who instead live by asking questions about other people's lives and who in confession dig, dig, dig into consciences. Your witness teaches priests to listen, to be close, to forgive and not to ask too many questions. To be simple, as Jesus said that father did who, when his son returned, full of sins and vices. That father did not sit in a confessional and start asking question after question. He accepted the son's repentance and embraced him. May your witness to the people of God, and this heart capable of

forgiving without causing pain, reach all priests. Thank you!

And you, dear brothers and sisters, I thank you for the love and the trust that you have for the Capuchin brothers. Thank you because you come here with trust! Let me say one thing to you. Do you know why you come here with trust? Because they help you without detracting from your dignity. For them, each of you is Jesus Christ.

Thank you for the trust that you give us. You are the Church, you are God's people. Jesus is with you. They will give you the things you need, but listen to the advice they give you; they will always give you good advice. And if you have something, some doubt, some hurt, talk to them and they will give you good advice. You know that they love you: otherwise, this Centre would not exist. Thank you for your trust. And one last thing. Pray! Pray for the Church. Pray for priests. Pray for the Capuchins. Pray for the bishops, for your bishop. Pray for me too ... I allow myself to ask all this. Pray for priests, don't forget.

Thank you so much! Now, each of you, think in your heart of all those who are dear to you, because I will also bless them, you and them. And another thing: if any of you has an enemy or anyone you dislike, think of them too, and they will also receive the blessing.

God bless you all, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thank you very much. ●