



National Office for Vocation

Called into God's wonderful light

MARRIAGE

Lord,

May they both praise you when they are happy and turn to you in their sorrows.

May they be glad that you help them in their work and know that you are with them in their need

May they pray to you in the community of the Church, and be your witnesses in the world.

May they reach old age in the company of their friends, and come at last to the kingdom of heaven.

(Nuptial blessing)

Introduction (5 - 10 mins)

Very often when we hear the word vocation we think of priests and nuns, but vocation is quite simply a call.

God calls us into life, through love. And love claims a response: in some deep part of our being we recognise that we are loved - not that we would ever put it in such clumsy terms!

We long to respond to God. St Augustine puts it neatly - 'our hearts are restless till they rest in you'. So: God calls us; we receive God's love. And then we long to respond to it.

We already have a vocation (a call) from God and yet not many of us are priests! So perhaps we have got the definition wrong. Perhaps our minds' dictionaries were set up wrongly! Maybe vocation is not so much *being a something* as simply just being.



Life is a gift received, which of its nature, is a gift to be given.

If we can take that as a reasonable proposition, where does it leave us? How about this as a description of life and love:

Life is a gift received, which of its nature, is a gift to be given

The couples are about to make a lifelong commitment to each other because they have experienced (received) love by their (to-be) spouse and love them back in return.

This is a practical template for God's love for us.

Life as a gift received (by each partner) (15 mins)

Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ. Before the world was made, God chose us, chose us in Christ to be holy and spotless, and to live through love in his presence, determining that we should become his adopted children, through Jesus Christ, for his own kind purposes; his free gift to us in the Beloved. And it is in him that we were claimed as God's own, chosen from the beginning.

Ephesians 1: selected vv3-14

Listen to the following short passage from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Bear in mind that you were created as a 'person' long before God invited you to become a spouse(!) as you listen to the piece.

Spend a moment thinking about the significant times in your life - whether or not God was apparent in them. After a few minutes, share perhaps just one thing, with the group.

Life is a gift to be given (to their partner, and any children) (15 mins)

This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every family, whether spiritual or natural, takes its name:

Out of his infinite glory, may he give you the power through his Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, you will with all the saints have strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; until knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God.

Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory be to him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3: 14-21

What do you want for your spouse? What do you want from your marriage? Listen to another the passage from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Imagine that you are standing before God with your partner, and that this prayer is being prayed for you.

How do you feel? Spend a moment or two reflecting on your dreams and hopes for your partner and your marriage. After a few minutes, share with the group, as before.

Marriage, as a means to unity with the Father through Christ, by the power of the Spirit. (10 mins)

Spend a few moments considering why do you want to marry? What does marriage confer? How does this relate to the hopes and dreams that you have for your partner and your marriage? When you are ready, share your thoughts with the group.

Closing Prayer

Loving Father, your plan for us is like a dream found in your heart, because each of us is found in God's heart.

You call us to life. You call each of us to express a particular aspect of your mind and heart.

In your call we find our name and our identity; we recognise our freedom and uniqueness. Father, help us to hear your voice. Through Christ our Lord, **AMEN.**