

ARCHBISHOP: MARRIAGE NEEDS PUBLIC SUPPORT

Couple Shares Key to 60 Years: Just Keep Going

LONDON, MAY 24, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Marriages need the clear and consistent support of civil and religious authorities, says the archbishop of Westminster.

Archbishop Vincent Nichols stated this Saturday at a Mass in which he blessed 600 married couples in celebration of this sacrament.

The couples, who renewed their vows of love to each other, counted some 20,000 total combined years of marriage in the group.

"Marriage is not a purely human institution," the prelate said in his homily, "for its common and permanent characteristics go deeper than any human institutions."

"When we look at our society today we know that its well-being passes by way of the family," he said. "Families, for better or worse, are the first school of life and love, where the capacity to relate to others, to grow, is founded."

"We must always be on the lookout for ways in which families can be more clearly and consistently supported," the archbishop affirmed.

He referenced a document, "Choosing the Common Good," publicized by the bishops' conference of England and Wales in March, which affirmed, "Families have a right to a life of their own, and governments do well when they interfere as little as possible while supporting parents in the exercise of their responsibilities."

Necessary policy

The prelate cited a further passage from the document: "But at the heart of necessary policy initiative to support the stability of couple relationships, it is essential to support marriage."

He noted that "the recently published policy document of our Coalition Government contains a number of welcome initiatives in support of the family," but "it lacks any specific reference to marriage."

Marriage, Archbishop Nichols noted, "brings considerable and measurable benefits to individuals, children, family life and society."

"It deserves a greater measure of public support," he added.

The prelate emphasized the Church's understanding of marriage as "a covenant by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life," which is "by its nature ordered toward the good of husband and wife and the procreation and education of children."

"Marriage is a sacrament," he affirmed "a unique, God-given, fruitful sign of God's loving and redeeming presence at work in our world."

"Marriage is not simply centered on Christ," the archbishop said, "but founded, re-founded, and continually built on him, for he is the one in whom we hold together, in whom we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, in whom we find our way to fulfilling the will of the Father."

Equally enriching

Edmund Adamus, director of Pastoral Affairs for the Diocese of Westminster, who organized the Mass, noted that "every Christian marriage marked by a significant anniversary tells a unique story to a world hungry for true love," a diocesan press release reported.

He continued: "It is natural that we stand in awe of couples who have reached 50 and even 60 years of marriage but it is also equally enriching to the older generation that many younger couples achieving ten years of commitment are doing so with vigor and for those who are parents, with much courage, as they strive to raise their children in a society that is so hostile to Christian virtue and family values.

"We are particularly privileged this year to be honoring so many couples of ten years as the primary educators of their children."

One couple who attended the celebration, Mr. and Mrs. Connors, are celebrating their 60th anniversary on Dec. 31.

They stated that they "don't know what the secret is."

The couple continued: "You just go from year to year.

"It was not easy at the beginning as rationing was still in place and wages were low, but we were happy to have each other. Marriage is not easy, but you commit yourself to each other and then just get on with it."

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On the Net:

Archbishop Nichol's homily: http://www.rcdow.org.uk/diocese/default.asp?library_ref=4&content_ref=2825