

Bishop Laffitte Encourages Forgiveness in Marriage

Urges Couples to Open Hearts to Christ's Love

MELBOURNE, Australia, APRIL 20, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Family is encouraging married couples to practice forgiveness as a particular expression of love.

Bishop Jean Laffitte made this appeal on Sunday in Melbourne at the 3rd National Catholic Family Gathering.

In his closing address for the three-day gathering, the prelate spoke to an audience of 800 participants about two ways of responding to the call to love: marriage and consecrated celibacy, the Melbourne Archdiocesan communications office reported.

Speaking about marriage, the bishop affirmed that "when the couple together disposes their hearts to love, this love opens itself to forgiveness."

"On this Passion Sunday," he added, "we see clearly the love of God which manifests itself in the Person of Christ who offers himself to bring about God's forgiveness."

Bishop Laffitte encouraged his listeners to take the love of Christ in all its dimensions as the foundation and hope for the family.

"Human love in its mature form, marriage, is good news," he affirmed. "It corresponds to a deep aspiration in the heart of man and woman."

"As an irrevocable gift the spouses make to each other, marriage seals a covenant that is, in its Christian form, a covenant made with them by Christ himself," the prelate stated.

Ecclesial solidarity

On Saturday, the bishop gave an address specifically for young people, in which he answered their questions about marriage and consecrated celibacy.

The weekend gathering closed with Mass presided over by Archbishop Denis Hart of Melbourne and concelebrated by Bishop Laffitte.

At the end of the Mass, Archbishop Hart led a brief video message to Benedict XVI from the participants. The Pope had sent them a similar message offering his blessing and assuring them of his prayers.

Matthew MacDonald from the Melbourne Archdiocese Life, Marriage and Family Office, which coordinated the event, noted, "The Holy Father's message, the presence of eight bishops with many

more priests and religious, eloquently expresses the solidarity of the entire Church in our mission to promote the indispensable and irreplaceable role of marriage and family life."

MacDonald continued: "As Christians, we can at times feel isolated by a culture which does not always provide the fertile soil in which families might flourish.

"But in allowing ourselves to be molded by Christ's love, trusting in his faithfulness and with the encouragement of so many like-minded sisters and brothers here with us, how could we have anything but great hope for the future?"

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