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Pontiff to Engaged Couples: Don't Be Afraid of Marriage

Don't Give Up on "Lofty Ideal of Love," He Exhorts

ANCONA, Italy, SEPT. 12, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI is inviting couples to be confident in embarking on the path of matrimony, saying they should not be afraid of the "great mystery," in which two persons become one flesh.

The Pope said this Sunday when he visited Ancona to close the 25th Italian National Eucharistic Congress. He finished the one-day visit by meeting with a group of engaged couples.

After one couple addressed some words to him, the Holy Father responded with an encouraging address on the beauty of human love and awareness of the challenges it faces.

He promised that both God and the Church are close to couples as they prepare for marriage, and acknowledged that problems with finding a stable job make it difficult to take on the commitment of marriage.

"Do not lose courage in face of the needs that seem to extinguish joy at the table of life," he said. "At the Wedding of Cana, when wine was lacking, Mary invited the servants to go to Jesus and she gave them a precise indication: 'Do whatever he tells you.' Treasure these words, the last of Mary's taken up in the Gospels -- virtually a spiritual testament -- and you will always have the joy of the celebration: Jesus is the wine of the celebration!"

The Holy Father exhorted the young couples: "Do not give up on pursuing the lofty ideal of love, which is a reflection and testimony of the love of God!"

Papal advice

Benedict XVI also had some practical advice. He recommended that couples shouldn't withdraw within themselves -- something he said can be "falsely tranquilizing."

"Instead, make your relationship become leaven in an active and responsible presence in the community," the Pope invited.

Also, he reminded the couples that love is not automatic, but requires a "journey of maturing."

"Beginning from the initial attraction and 'feeling well' with the other, educate yourselves to 'love well,' to 'want the good' of the other," he said. "Love lives from gratuitousness, self-sacrifice, forgiveness and respect for the other."

Gift of forever

The Bishop of Rome told the couples to "educate yourselves henceforth in the liberty of fidelity, which leads to protecting one another, to the point of the one living for the other."

He invited them to prepare themselves to choose "forever" with conviction.

"Indissolubility, more than a condition, is a gift that must be desired, requested and lived, beyond any changing human situation," the Pope reflected.

He also offered an evaluation on popular culture's recommendation to live together before marriage.

"Do not think," he said, that "living together is a guarantee for the future. If you skip the steps of intimacy, which require respect for time and a gradual progression of expressions, you will 'get burned' in love; love needs room for Christ, who is capable of making a human love faithful, happy and indissoluble."

Finally, the Holy Father spoke of the experience of love as having a "tension toward God."

"True love promises the infinite! Hence, make of this time of preparation for matrimony an itinerary of faith: Rediscover for your life as a couple the centrality of Jesus Christ and of walking with the Church," he said. "Mary teaches us that the good of each one depends on listening with docility to the word of the Son. In those who trust in him, the water of daily life is transformed into the wine of a love that makes life good, beautiful and fruitful."

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