

Kia ora tātou Fathers, Deacons and Parish pastoral staff,

For the past 22 years, the New Zealand Catholic Network of Marriage Educators board (CNME) has supported and promoted the annual St Valentine’s Day Mass, celebrated in some New Zealand Dioceses with the support of local (Arch) Diocesan staff.

With the uncertainty of gatherings due to the pandemic, the NZ Catholic Network of Marriage Educators, and supporters of marriage ministry in New Zealand, wrote to the New Zealand Bishops to ask if World Marriage Day could be added to the NZCBC National Calendar, the Bishops kindly agreed. The inclusion of this date onto the National Calendar means that Parishes and communities throughout Aotearoa New Zealand are encouraged to celebrate and support married life at their Masses on Sunday 13th February 2022.

Originally promoted by Worldwide Marriage Encounter, the occasion of ‘World Marriage Day’ has been celebrated in many countries throughout the world. In observing World Marriage Day, our Church brings the celebration of married love to a whole new level through Sunday Liturgies dedicated to the beauty of marriage with suggestions for prayers and blessings that honour married couples. An online event on the evening of WMD is offered as an innovative way to enrich the lives of married couples in our communities via livestream, as we continue to deal with the global pandemic. In recognition of the importance of strong marriages for the life of the Church, we offer here, prayer and blessing suggestions for use on ‘World Marriage Day’ Sunday 13th February 2022. From Pope Francis' Letter to Married Couples on the Feast of the Holy Family, December 26, 2021…

*‘Therefore, I encourage you, dear married couples, to be active in the Church, especially in her pastoral care of families. “Shared responsibility for her mission demands that married couples and ordained ministers, especially bishops, cooperate in a fruitful manner in the care and custody of the domestic Churches”. Never forget that the family is the “fundamental cell of society” (Evangelii Gaudium, 66). Marriage is an important part of the project of building the “culture of encounter” (Fratelli Tutti, 216). Families are thus called to bridge generations in passing on the values that forge true humanity. New creativity is needed, to express, amid today’s challenges, the values that constitute us as a people, both in our societies and in the Church, the People of God.’*

It is the hope of the Catholic Network of Marriage Educators that you will find these suggestions and resources useful in your parish celebrations of Marriage.

Blessings,

Felicity Giltrap: Wellington Diocesan rep (Chair) Gerry Smith: Auckland Diocesan rep (Secretary)

Msgr Bernard Kiely NZCBC Chaplain Brigid Conroy: Hamilton Diocesan rep

Neil Ivamy: Palmerston North acting rep (WWME) Maria Sequeira: Christchurch Diocesan rep

Amy Armstrong: Dunedin Diocesan rep Resty Sales: Marriage educator Elected rep (CFC)