

**Homily for the Mass for Couples Married Fifty Years or More  
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Springfield, IL**

**Mass for the 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B) | September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024 AD**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

Reverend Fathers and Deacons, and my dear brothers and sisters in Christ: It is good to be with you to celebrate this Mass for Couples Married Fifty Years or More. I commend all of you on celebrating your commitment to one another for more than half of a century. Congratulations especially to those who are celebrating their Golden Wedding Anniversary this year. Your fidelity is a wonderful witness to the entire Church of the beauty of the vocation of matrimony and is a symbol of the love that Christ has for His Church.

A powerfully moving and memorable event took place a few weeks ago this past July in Indianapolis, where 60,000 Catholics gathered for our National Eucharistic Congress, and countless more joined us via livestream. We had a smaller but still very significant version of this in our own diocese with our Diocesan Eucharistic Congress held in the BOS Convention Center in Springfield, with 5,000 participants in October of 2023. Our Diocesan Eucharistic Congress and the National Eucharistic Congress were major parts

of the National Eucharistic Revival, which now continues with a special Year of Mission. This Year of Mission calls for Catholics to share their rekindled love of the Eucharist with other people. This is an essential aspect of our being disciples of Jesus Christ and stewards of God's gifts of creation.

As we gather here to ask God's blessings on those married fifty years or more, this is a time for all of us to reflect on the significance of the Holy Eucharist and its impact on the way we live. We are called to share God's love with others, but all of us who take our Christian identity seriously must live in such a way that our Christianity becomes evident in our words and in our actions. For married couples, as you renew your commitment of married love to each other, the best way to keep the flame of that love burning within you is to renew it with the fire of divine love that you receive in the Holy Eucharist. In this way, you keep Christ at the center of your lives. It is He who keeps your love for each other strong through His grace received in the sacraments.

Our readings from Sacred Scripture today provide succinct and specific lessons on how to grow in Christ's love.

This lesson from the *Book of Wisdom* in today's first reading (*Wisdom* 2:12, 17-20) is that the truly wise in this world are those who choose to serve

the Lord. Its opening verses contrast the way of God's servants with another way. God's servants are on the path that leads to eternal life; the path taken by the ungodly leads to death. This reading explores the misguided thinking of those who are determined to remain on the wrong path. In the view of the ungodly, there is nothing beyond the experiences of this world. They do not recognize the truth, already stated in this book, that God fashioned man and woman for immortality (1:12-15). They fail to see that justice, patience, gentleness, and trust in God are strengths that belong to those who see beyond this world's limitations. Death will not be the end of the just. As a later verse reveals, even in death, the just remain in the hands of God (3:1).

In our second reading (*James 3:16-4:3*), Saint James asks, "where do the conflicts among you come from?" The answer is that conflicts and disorder and every foul practice come from jealousy, selfish ambition, worldly obsessions, and passions. In contrast, the wisdom that comes from God fosters peace. It is exhibited in mercy, gentleness, and sincerity.

In today's Gospel from Saint Mark (*Mark 9:30-37*), while Jesus is telling His disciples about his impending suffering and death, the disciples are arguing over which one of them should be considered the greatest! In response, Jesus shows great patience with his followers. Jesus begins His

corrective teaching by stating His principle of discipleship. “If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all” (9:35).

This is the key to the longevity of your marriages. Husbands and wives who truly love each other, that is, they seek the good for one another, do not ask who is greater, the man or the woman, the husband or the wife. They put the other first, asking what they need and how they can serve their spouse to make their life better.

The poet Robert Frost wrote, “By faithfully working eight hours a day, you may eventually get to be boss—and work twelve hours a day.” That is a fitting description of the reward program of Christianity, for the requirement to serve is virtually endless.

Thomas Merton, before becoming a Trappist monk, was an ambitious man on the move. From the confines of the monastery, he said, “When ambition ends, happiness begins.” Later, he added this reflection on our culture’s obsession with upward striving: “People may spend their whole lives climbing the ladder of success only to find, once they reach the top, that the ladder is leaning against the wrong wall.” The faithful disciple finds true happiness by following the path of Jesus Christ.

May God give us this grace. Amen.