

## **Diocesan Golden Wedding Anniversary Mass/28<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year**

*Scripture Readings of the 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Year*

October 14, 2018     3:00 p.m.     St. Augustine Cathedral

My brother priests and deacons; Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ! As I said at the beginning of Mass, I'm so very happy to welcome all of you here to St. Augustine Cathedral. This is one of the events that I look forward to celebrating so much every year---it's a great, happy event, and it's one that brings people together for such an important reason---to celebrate the most basic and essential aspect of human life, and our faith life: to celebrate Marriage and Family.

There were 107 couples who are celebrating 50 years of married life throughout the Diocese that we became aware of and whom we invited, and I am so very happy that so many of you (53 couples, just about half of you) were able to come, along with your families and friends who accompanied you today. In addition to most of you celebrating 50 years of marriage, I understand that we have four couples celebrating 55 years, and one couple celebrating 60 years within this year's "Class of 2018". And so, during this Mass, we ask God's blessings upon all the Jubilarians couples---those who are here, as well as those unable to be with us today.

At this time, I'd like to ask all those who are here for this Mass who are not celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, or beyond, to please stand..... Dear Jubilarians, we, your children, grandchildren, relatives and brothers and sisters in the Family of Faith, take this occasion to give you a standing ovation in recognition of all that you have accomplished throughout your 50 years of Marriage. Please join me in applause....

That "ovation", my dear Jubilarians, obviously comes from our heart and expresses our deep admiration, our sincere appreciation, and our genuine affection in a way that words might fail us. Congratulations! Thank you! And God Bless you!

How many of you have already celebrated your 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary earlier this year? And how many of you are still looking forward to that actual anniversary day in the months to come? And, I assume that you either already had, or are planning to have, a big family celebration.

With those celebrations, involving your family and those closest to you in your lives, I'm sure you've had a lot of time to reminisce, right? You naturally think back to that special day 50 years ago, in 1968, a very historic year, when the world was far different than it is in 2018. January 1968: USS Pueblo captured by North Korea....Assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (April 4), and Bobbie Kennedy (June 4)....The Rock Musical "Hair" begins on Broadway, and Petula Clark became everyone's favorite female singer....Pope St. Paul VI issues the landmark Encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*....Appolo VIII is the first manned mission to circle the moon and return....The average cost of a gallon of gas was 34 cents, and the average price of a new car was \$2,900!

But as far as we're concerned, the most important event of 1968 was the day YOU two got married, and established a home together, and perhaps began to raise a family.

This Anniversary Year is an important time to look back, and reminisce about the good times, and the bad times; the joys, and the sorrows; the times of success, and the moments of some temporary defeats----over these 50 years.

Today's Scripture Readings, which are the Readings for the 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time are so appropriate for today's celebration.

Our First Reading is from the Book of Wisdom, in which we hear the great Solomon praying to God for the virtues of Prudence and Wisdom. As he knew, those virtues were more important than any bank account filled with wealth, or more important than a warehouse full of possessions. Prudence is God's grace to help you make good and reasonable decisions; Wisdom is God's grace to help you to be mindful of what is truly important. That is what Solomon prayed for. And I'm pretty sure that most of you would agree with Solomon that making prudent choices and wise decisions is the key to a successful marriage. And that's not possible without communicating clearly with one another----weighing those decisions, and talking about what the choices you must consider, as well as their consequences.

Today's Second Reading from the Letter to the Hebrews teaches us about the importance of paying attention to, reflecting on, and being guided by God's Holy Word. In that Reading, we heard that *God's Word is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword.*" Well, first of all, God's Word is "living" because God's Word became Flesh and made His dwelling among us. God's Word is alive

in Jesus, our Savior. And so, to be guided by God's Word really means to be guided by Jesus' teachings, by His lived example, and by His graces and blessings through the Sacraments that He has provided for us through the Church. If as married couples you don't pay attention to God's Word, or look to Him for guidance, and if you don't make sure that your spiritual lives stay nourished through the Gift of the Holy Eucharist, you will dry up spiritually, and that will definitely have a negative impact on your marriage relationship. God's Word, Jesus, is a "two-edged sword" who helps to cut out what is negative, and to bring healing and growth to what is virtuous.

Finally, that leads to today's Gospel, in which we see Jesus in a very profound conversation with the Rich Young Man, who came running up to Jesus, knelt down and asked: "*Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*" That "rich young man" could be any of us, or all of us. He asks the primordial question that every human being---at least every person of Faith---must ask, and answer, about our lives. Jesus' immediate answer responds to what the young man, or any of us, must do at the most minimal of levels: make sure to follow the Commandments.....Don't kill anyone; don't commit armed robbery or steal anything; don't commit adultery; don't commit fraud. In other words, avoid all the big and major sins!

But the young man knew there was more to life than just doing the minimum, and so he asked the next most important question: What more do I need to do? Jesus' answer gives us the challenge of our lifetimes: to put anyone and everything else aside EXCEPT to love Jesus. But of course, the only way for us to really, deeply, faithfully and consistently love Jesus is to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

And for you, living the Sacrament of Marriage, that "*neighbor*" **is** your Spouse, and continues to your Family, and goes out from there to all your other "neighbors". And the more that you love one another really, deeply, faithfully and consistently, you are loving Jesus, and that is how you will inherit Eternal Life.

It's in fulfilling our daily responsibilities with love here on earth that we find the way to Heaven.

Pope Francis, who has the wonderful ability to take profoundly important points like that one that Jesus just gave, and apply it into everyday language. He did that in a recent talk to Golden Jubilarians when he said: "The simple love that

is fostered over 50 years of marriage shows the love of God to others. It is in the little things that are done as part of the marriage, little acts of love. The holding of a hand, the grabbing of a blanket to keep the other warm, the smile on a hard day, the listening ear, the cooking of a meal, the hug on a bad day, the making of coffee, all point to the sacrificial love given to God through the Cross of His Son. These little sacrifices are noticed by others and point others to the ultimate love of God.”

In just a minute, I will invite you to renew the Vows you first made 50 years (or more) ago on your wedding day. When you first said: “I Do”, you had no idea what would come your way, yet, you still said it: “I Do”. And every day of these last 50 years, you have said “I Do” again and again and again.

- For 50 years, you have kept your vows to love each other faithfully and generously.
- For the past 600 months, you have loved each other for better and for worse;
- For 2,600 weeks, you have supported each other for richer and for poorer;
- For 18,250 days, you have been there for each other in sickness and in health.
- And without counting the hours, minutes and seconds, no matter how we count it up, from the first “I Do” 50 years ago, until the “I Do” you will say on your final day in this world, you are doing what Jesus told us makes us just like Him: you are putting aside wealth, possessions and anything/anyone else for the one who is your spouse to whom you are married in Christ, and the one who is your pathway to “inheriting Eternal Life”.

My dear Jubilarians, in the name of the Church, I thank you for your Lifetime of Love. And I thank you for the powerful “Sermon” you have preached and continue to preach to the world. As you reminisce about all that has been, as you take comfort in the love you have for one another, and as you help one another to take comfort in your love for Jesus, may God give you the grace and the strength to keep loving one another with the same, sacrificial and generous love of Jesus for us and all the world.

It's not always easy. Sometimes you might even think that it's impossible. But remember what Jesus told us in the Gospel: *"For human beings it (may be) impossible. But, not for God. All things are possible for God."*

And that's how you live a life-time of faithful and fruitful love for one another, just like Jesus' Love for us---the Love that redeemed the world. That is how you help each other to answer the most important of all questions about what you must do to inherit eternal life; you do that by loving Jesus, and loving another, and that's how you help one another get to Heaven! God bless you, now and always!