

Accord: Marriage/Family: 14th October 2012.

The family is the most important cell/unit in the Christian Community, and in the Parish. It is the most important cell in society. If we have good marriages, we have good families, and if we have good families, we have a good parish and a good society. This means that we have a caring society in which people live in harmony, peace, justice and love. We have a society in which people live out of an inner peace, harmony, and a sense of well being and inner peace. This is why the Church calls marriage the “Little Church”. It contains within itself all the elements which Christ wants in his church. And as we know, the call of Christ is a call to healthy relationships, for the Gospel is about our relationships. The Gospel is the Good News about God’s relationship with us, and the many relationships which we have in our lives. We are to live all our relationships after the example of Jesus. In the marriage relationship we have many of the elements which should be present in all our relationships. We are to love one another as God has loved us. We are to forgive one another as God has forgiven us. We are to relate to one another as God relates to us.

Marriage and the family life is the most important means through which God is made known in our world. It is through father and mother that children experience and learn about God. If God is not made known here it is unlikely that he will be made known at all. Here we are at the centre of all life, for here is where we are welcomed and loved. Here we are cherished, reared, grow, and become adult people. Here we find ourselves, and we find our God. In the family we find the important plan of God for us in the world. Every other relationship in life is learned, formed, and grows out of family.

The family is the foundation stone of our world, and every couple getting married is grafted into that foundation stone. We can have great discoveries in technology, medicine, and science, but all are great only if the relationships at home are great. We can have all the degrees in the world through education, but these are only great, if the family relationships are great. We can have all the money in the world, but we will still be poor, if the family relationships are poor. We can have all the knowledge in the world, but it is the experience in our home which makes us happy, or unhappy in our lives. We must experience, contentment, inner harmony, and happiness, before we become content, and have inner harmony and happiness ourselves.

We know instinctively that marriage and family life is important. This is why the marriage of couples in a family or parish is not just another event, but is the event of a lifetime. This explains all the preparation, excitement, and well wishes. This is why marriage is never taken for granted. This is why we have pre-marriage courses for all who get married. We have counselling services for those who find difficulty in their marriage or relationship. This is why people today have become more adult, and mature in seeking help or advice on their marriage journey through life. Jesus is always close to young people who are getting married. He is also close to those who are married, or any couple who may have difficulty.

Here in the diocese of Clogher Jesus works through a voluntary body called Accord. Accord is a group of trained lay people. They are trained to give pre-marriage courses to all thinking of getting married. They also provide a counselling service to anyone who may have a difficulty in their relationship. In other words they are a group of lay people who work voluntarily to help all to live a happy and fulfilled married life. Perhaps I could just mention the

topics touched upon in a pre-marriage course, so that I can clarify course given by them. They cover with the young couple such subjects as-- marriage and communication in marriage,-- marriage and conflict management, -- the sacrament of marriage,-- marriage and commitment,-- marriage and being a parent,-- knowing yourself physically and emotionally. As Christ put marriage at the top of his agenda the church also puts the good of marriage at the top of its agenda. Accord runs their pre-marriage courses, and their counselling service from two centres. One is in Enniskillen, and the other in Monaghan. Last week, Bishop Liam celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving - to mark the fortieth anniversary of Accord in Enniskillen. Today we too express our thanks to Accord for their work for us, and our people during these forty years.