In the One Christ, We Are One
A Letter to Our Married and Engaged Couples

Dear Friends,

Some of you are preparing to stand before the altar and promise your lives to one another. Others have been living that promise for years, through joys and struggles that you could not have imagined on your wedding day. Wherever you are in that journey, I want you to know how grateful I am for you. Your love and faithfulness are a gift to my own vocation and our parish family.

Cardinal Tobin's recent reflection on marriage and family life invites us to rediscover the beauty of this vocation. As I read it, I thought of you: your hopes for the future, the responsibilities you carry, and the quiet sacrifices that often go unnoticed. I wanted to share a few thoughts with you as your pastor.

When Jesus speaks about marriage, He says that the two become one flesh (Matthew 19:6). This unity does not mean losing your personality or agreeing about everything. It means learning to build a shared life in which neither person's needs, dignity, or dreams can be treated as unimportant. You remain two distinct people, learning to love with a growing sense of "we." *I must decrease and we-in-Christ must increase!*

In the one Christ, we are one. For people who have received the sacrament of marriage, these words are both a gift and a daily calling. Christ draws you into His own faithful love and teaches you how to live it together.

Marriage between two baptized persons is a sacrament. Through your freely given consent, you enter a lifelong covenant that makes

Christ's love for His Church visible. Your promise is faithful, exclusive, and open to the gift of life. God gives you grace to live that promise, helping you grow in holiness through the very person with whom you share your home.

That holiness takes shape in ordinary moments. It is listening when you are tired, speaking honestly without humiliating one another, sharing responsibilities fairly, and noticing when your spouse needs encouragement. It is learning to say, "I was wrong," and allowing an apology to lead to a real change. Sometimes the most important act of love in a day is putting down the phone and giving each other your full attention.

To those preparing for marriage, enjoy preparing for your wedding. But give even greater care to preparing for your life together. Speak honestly about God, faith, children, money, family expectations, and how you respond to conflict. Let marriage preparation help you know one another more deeply. Bring your relationship into prayer, and ask yourselves how you will help each other grow closer to God.

To those already married, please keep making room for each other. Familiarity can lead us to assume that we already know everything our spouse is carrying. Ask. Listen. Make time together. Have date nights! Pray together, even if you begin with a simple Our Father before bed. Come to Sunday Mass and seek God's mercy in Confession. You need nourishment for the love you are called to give.

For those raising children, your home is a domestic church. What does this mean, "domestic church"? **"Domestic church" means the Church we live at home.** Your children learn something about God through the way they see you love, forgive, pray, and care for others. You do not have to be flawless parents. They also need to see what humility looks like when you make a mistake. Parents are their

children's first teachers of faith, especially through their daily example. It does not mean having a perfect or unusually religious household - far from what I mean. It only means allowing Christ to shape the ordinary life you share, around the dinner table, in difficult conversations, and in the ways you serve one another. *And to couples carrying the sorrow of infertility or the loss of a child, please know that your marriage has enduring dignity and fruitfulness. Your grief deserves tenderness and companionship.*

I also want to speak to those whose marriage is struggling. Please do not assume that asking for help means you have failed. Seeking pastoral support or qualified counseling can be an act of courage and love. Forgiveness takes honesty, and rebuilding trust takes time and changed behavior. No one should understand marital faithfulness as requiring them to remain in danger or endure abuse.

Here at Little Flower, I want our couples to know that they belong and that they can seek help. The Church's teaching offers a beautiful vision of marriage, and our pastoral care must help real people grow toward that fullness with truth, patience, and mercy.

Thank you for every quiet act of fidelity. Thank you for the love you give when it costs you something. May Jesus remain at the heart of your marriage, and may Mary and Joseph accompany you as you build a home where faith is lived, forgiveness is practiced, and love keeps growing.

Be assured of my prayers.

Your parish priest,
Fr. JC