

## **A Letter from the Catholic Diocesan Bishops of New Jersey**

February 15, 2009

One of the greatest expressions of love is the Sacrament of Matrimony, a lifetime exclusive union of a man and a woman, in which they give and receive mutual help and love, commit to a lifetime of total fidelity, and from their union bring forth and raise children.

The self-giving love of husband and wife reflects the mutual love of Christ for the Church and the love of the Church for Christ. We must remember that without the help of God, man and woman cannot achieve the union of their lives to which God calls them. Truly, it is through the love and struggles of marriage that a couple attains holiness.

Marriage not only is a call to holiness, it also is the foundation of the family and society. Marriage as a union of one man and one woman has its roots not only in human tradition and history, but also in natural law, which transcends all man-made law. God is the author of marriage.

As Shepherds of our dioceses, we salute married couples who are persevering in their vocation and who truly are on the way to holiness.

Unfortunately, our secular culture's preoccupation with personal autonomy and self fulfillment has led to fewer people marrying, increased divorce rates, increased cohabitation of unmarried adults and calls for same sex marriage.

In the face of these serious challenges, Catholics cannot stand silent. Our first responsibility is to pray. Therefore we, the Catholic Bishops of New Jersey, have designated February 15 and 22, 2009 as days of prayer for the strengthening and preservation of marriage.

We ask everyone to pray that the love of spouses for one another continues to grow steadfast and strong, for in strengthening marriage and families, we help to build up the Body of Christ, the Church.

May God Bless You.

Most Reverend John J. Myers  
Archbishop, Archdiocese of Newark

Most Reverend Joseph A. Galante  
Bishop, Diocese of Camden

Most Reverend Paul G. Bootkoski  
Bishop, Diocese of Metuchen

Most Reverend Arthur J. Serratelli  
Bishop, Diocese of Paterson

Most Reverend John M. Smith  
Bishop, Diocese of Trenton

Most Reverend William Skurla  
Bishop, Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic

Most Reverend Joseph Younan  
Bishop, Our Lady of Deliverance Syriac Catholic Diocese