

Fit For Mission? - A Marriage Preparation Course:
Bishop Patrick O'Donoghue in collaboration with the Lancaster Diocesan Marriage and Family Life Commission to produce final *Fit for Mission?* document at Easter 2009



Marriage preparation courses must be a 'journey of re-discovery', that distinguishes between what 'everyone else is doing, and what our own being intimately tells us.'
(Pope Benedict XVI)

'The revelation of God about marriage does not contradict the nature of human beings created by Him but further explains it. When this marriage preparation course works at its best it will help young couples re-discover truths about love that they already sense and know deep down.' (Bishop Patrick O'Donoghue)

In an exciting new development for the *Fit for Mission?* initiative, Bishop Patrick O'Donoghue and Lancaster team in collaboration with the Lancaster Diocesan Marriage & Family Life Commission will soon provide a new Marriage Preparation course drawing upon the richness of the Scriptures and the Church's living teaching. The *Fit for Mission? A Marriage Preparation* course content will be set within the living context of the experience and wisdom of those who live the sacrament of matrimony. Nonetheless, priority is given to the doctrine of the Church. Support with Marriage Preparation in the parishes of the Lancaster Diocese was one of the key findings of the recent *Fit for Mission?* parish review of the Diocese. Bishop O'Donoghue has been enthusiastic to see the publication of this important resource which has been in progress for at least two years - before his retirement as Diocesan Bishop on 1 May 2009.

The Course, which will be the final document of the *Fit for Mission?* initiative, takes very seriously the fact that while practising Catholic couples will also attend courses, many couples presenting themselves for marriage preparation are non-practising, and, more often than not, mixed, that is the other partner is either a non-practising member of another Christian Church or ecclesial community, or has no religious back-ground. Thus, *Fit for Mission? Marriage Preparation* supports two distinct streams of course: *Marriage Preparation* and *Marriage Preparation Plus*, both of which are contained in the *Course Presenter's Guide*.

The Marriage Preparation Course is designed to meet the specific needs of those couples with an inactive faith and so assumes little or no knowledge of the Faith. These

couples have little or no knowledge of the Faith or experience of the Church, and their motives for wanting a 'Church wedding' are varied and complex. In these cases, the fundamental approach of the marriage preparation course is one of evangelisation.

The Marriage Preparation Plus Course has been developed for those couples presenting themselves for marriage preparation who are either both practising Catholics, or where one partner is a practising member of another Christian church or ecclesial community, and they have an active faith and spirituality. This stream therefore assumes knowledge of the Faith, and a living relationship with Christ. In these cases, the fundamental approach of the marriage preparation course is one of catechesis.

The Course is flexible and adaptable and may be delivered as suggested or according to a timetable more suited to local needs. Sessions contain some formal input time and some discussion time and activities. Each stream contains the following six sessions, and will involve some homework for the couples.

Session 1: Two become one

Session 2: Love is...?

Session 3: Respect the differences

Session 4; God's body talk

Session 5: A little help from my friends

Session 6: Loving each other in Christ

The Course Presenters Guide Book and the two couples books, Marriage Preparation Course and Marriage Preparation Plus Course are to be published by the CTS at Easter 2009.