



E-Newsletter

Making the home  
the heart of the Church

## February 2009

February is a big month for romantic love! With World Marriage Sunday (8), Marriage Week (8-15), and St Valentines Day (14) all occurring it is appropriate to reflect on the gift that romantic love and marriage is in our lives.

### Sunday 1st

#### Ordinary Time 4

The Power of Jesus *Mk 1:21-28*

### Monday 2nd

#### Presentation of the Lord

### Sunday 8th

World Marriage Day

#### Ordinary Time 5

Suffering *Mk 1:29-39*

### Saturday 14th

#### St Valentine's Day

### Sunday 15th

#### Ordinary Time 6

Jesus Heals a Man *Mk 1:40-45*

### Sunday 22nd

#### Ordinary Time 7

Jesus Heals a Paralysed Man

*Mk 21-12*

### Wednesday 25th

#### Ash Wednesday

**Insufficient time together is a curse on relationships. Whether our relationship is steaming forward or drifting on the current, time together is like a balm, healing the bumps and bruises of life and stimulating our feelings of affection and tenderness. With St Valentines' Day approaching, it's the perfect opportunity to rethink our priorities and give the gift of time to our beloved.**

## The Quality Time Myth

Modern relationships are plagued by busyness. Whether one works in the paid workforce or in the home, our relationships rarely get the time and attention that they deserve. For a while, most marriages can sustain themselves against such neglect. But soon, the reserves of good will are depleted. Now, instead of relishing the little time we do have together, there is a backlog of unresolved disappointment, resentment and frustration that take centre stage.

A marriage is a bit like a home. All relationships accumulate dirt with time. When we have plenty of time to share and talk through the misunderstandings and address unmade decisions, the dirt is swept away and we can relax and enjoy our relationship. When we neglect our relationship however, the dirt accumulates. Pretty soon it's an insurmountable pile. When we finally *do* stop long enough to be present to each other, the first thing that comes up in the conversation is the dirt. It's impossible to relax and enjoy each other when there is so much important house-keeping to do and we really don't know when the next opportunity to deal with it will come around.

Before we know it, an argument has started and it is definitely *not* fun. What started out as an enjoyable evening turns sour with both of us believing the other hijacked the agenda. If this becomes a pattern, within a year we realise that almost every time we stop to talk or go on a date, we end up arguing. We realise that we don't enjoy each other's company like we used to. Within another year, we tell ourselves it just isn't worth the effort anymore.

### Quantity is part of Quality!

Many people justify the lack of time spent with their loved ones by saying 'we have quality time'. They tell themselves that it's okay to be so busy with other stuff because the time they do have together is high calibre. In truth, **Quality Time** is only effective with a foundation of '**Quantity Time**' - low intensity companionship which builds trust and openness. **Quality Time** requires emotional vulnerability. This disposition can not be turned on and off at will; it is nurtured through **Quantity Time** - lots of low intensity time spent together, often in routine activities like washing up, gardening or going for a walk.

Just like food, quality doesn't help if there's simply not enough of it - we need a staple diet of **Quantity Time** to keep our relationship healthy. Of course, what's true for a marriage is also true for our relationships with our children. So often, we proudly set out to be available to our children, only to find that they don't really want our 100% attention; they just want us in the background, ready to encourage and affirm.

Fortunately, we don't need to have enormous, uninterrupted slabs of time together in order to experience the benefits. Regular, brief get-togethers make a backbone of trust and connection in **Quantity Time** which can then be built upon by more substantial and intense **Quality Time**. Small changes in our schedule or routine can make a huge difference. For example, scheduling an extra 5 minutes in the morning before leaving home allows us to connect in an unhurried good-bye kiss. Organising an early dinner for the kids and eating late when children are settled allows for relaxed conversation and debrief at day's end. Working together on household and garden chores instead of each doing their own, is time together without neglecting our responsibilities. One couple we know had a habit of spending the first 15 minutes after work in a 'kid-free' quiet time while he changed out of work clothes. The kids knew not to disturb them and they could rely on each other to hear a bit about their day and most importantly to reconnect on an emotional level.

These short interludes are far more effective in keeping our relationships on track than extravagant occasional event. This year when St Valentine's day comes around make a gift to last all year long. Forget the big date out or the grand gesture with flowers and chocolates. Instead, give a gift of time. It will be a gift not only for your lover, but also for your marriage.