

During a special encounter with engaged couples, Pope Francis emphasized that to love someone forever is possible if we are humble, and that marriage should be a celebration filled with joy.

“We build a house together, not alone!” the pontiff observed in his Feb. 14 address, “You would not wish to build it on the shifting sands of emotions, but on the rock of true love, the love that comes from God.”

Over 20,000 couples flocked to St. Peter’s Square in order to participate in the Valentine’s Day event, which was organized by the Pontifical Council for the Family, and which reflected on the theme “The joy of 'Yes' forever.”

Following testimonies given by couples, readings and songs dedicated to love in its various forms, Pope Francis spoke to the couples on the fear of living together forever, the matrimonial way of life, and the idea of marriage as a celebration.

The Pope told them that one does not marry only when all problems are solved, but rather to face problems together.

“Today many people are afraid of making definitive decisions that affect them for all their lives,” he noted, “because it seems impossible and this mentality leads many who are preparing for marriage to say, 'We will stay together for as long as our love lasts.’”

“What do we mean by 'love'?” posed the Pope, asking if it is a “mere emotion, a psycho-physical state?” and stating that if so, “it cannot provide the foundation for building something solid.”

However, if a relationship is “a growing reality,” then we build it “in the same way that we build a house,” he said, “And we build a house together, not alone!”

“We must not allow ourselves to be conquered by a ‘throwaway culture,’” emphasized the pontiff, stating that “this fear of 'forever’” is only “cured by entrusting oneself day by day to the Lord Jesus in a life that becomes a daily spiritual path of common growth, step by step.”

Drawing attention to the challenge of staying together and loving each other forever, the Pope observed that “In the Our Father prayer we say ‘Give us this day our daily bread,’” and that “married couples may also learn to pray, ‘Give us this day our daily love,’ teach us to love each other, to care for each other.”

Reflecting on the “art” of living together, the pontiff emphasized that this is “a patient, beautiful and fascinating journey which can be summarized in three words: please, thank you and sorry.”

“‘Please’ is a kind request to be able to enter into the life of someone else with respect and care,” he observed, highlighting that “true love does not impose itself with hardness and aggression.”

Stating that there is a great need of more “courtesy” in modern society, the Pope emphasized the importance of saying thank you, explaining that “gratitude” is also “an important sentiment.”

“Do we know how to say thank you? In your relationship, and in your future as married couples, it is important to keep alive your awareness that the other person is a gift from God,” observed the pontiff, “and we should always give thanks for gifts from God.”

Observing how we make many errors in our lives, the Pope noted that we make “many mistakes. We all do,” and “this is why we need to be able to use this simple word, ‘sorry.’”

“In general we are all ready to accuse others and to justify ourselves. It is an instinct that lies at the origins of many disasters,” he said, encouraging the couples “to recognize our mistakes and to apologize,” because “in this way, the Christian family grows.”

“We are all aware that the perfect family does not exist, nor does the perfect husband, nor the perfect wife. We exist, and we are sinners,” but Jesus gives us a secret, the Pope observed, “never let a day go by without asking forgiveness, or without restoring peace to your home.”

Concluding his address, Pope Francis emphasized that “marriage should be a celebration, but a Christian rather than a worldly one.”

Recalling how Jesus turned water into wine during the wedding feast at Cana, the Pope explained that he saved the celebration, and that “what happened at Cana two thousand years ago, happens in reality at every wedding feast.”

“It is the presence of the Lord, who reveals Himself and the gift of His grace, which will render your marriage full and profoundly true.”

Encouraging the couples to focus on what is “truly important” during their ceremonies, he observed how “some people are more concerned with external signs, with the banquet, the dress,” emphasizing that their wedding ought “to be sober.”

Although external signs are important, the Pope explained, they only bear weight “if they are able to indicate the true reason for your joy: the Lord's blessing upon your love.”

“Ensure that, like the wine in Cana, the external signs of your wedding feast reveal the

presence of the Lord and remind you, and all those present, of the origin of and reason for your joy.”