

Homily for Mass for Couples Celebrating 50 Years or More of Marriage
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
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- In his book, *Three to Get Married*, Venerable Fulton Sheen speaks about the mystery of love that unfolds as a couple walks through the years together.
 - At first, it is the mystery of their spouse. Each day they come to know them, body, soul, and spirit in a deeper way.
 - Then, when children come along, they get to see the mystery of fatherhood or motherhood blossoming in their husband or wife.
 - Then the mystery grows as their children do. Certainly, they see the maturation of their children, but they also see what we might call father-craft and mother-craft in their spouse: how their love is poured out into the family, how they sculpt and form the lives entrusted to their care...
 - The mystery of love grows further during the hardships and heartache that parents go through as their children head out into the world, and face their own battles, struggles, rejections, and joys.¹

- But I want to speak today about another mystery of love that only unfolds as a couple enters into the final years of their life together.
 - First of all, you see, and we get to see, **love despite physical challenges**. The things that you did together when you first met; the fun and games you played with your children; the teaching and forming that you were able to give them are all harder now, perhaps impossible.
 - But love is not thereby lost! You offer us a living-lesson of what Jesus was trying to teach the Pharisees.
 - Fidelity consists in *doing everything* from the motivation of true love.

- My dear couples. You have loved each other in so many ways all these years. Now you teach us all that love can be given in the smallest and humblest of ways – perhaps just a glance, a memory, a prayer, or a laugh – as long as it is constant over time, as constant as we are to ourselves.
 - In this regard, I am reminded of my own parents, who were married for 49 years until my Dad died in 1997.
 - Mom & Dad often seemed to know each other so well that they did not even need to use words to coordinate their actions in caring for a family of nine children.
 - Similarly, perhaps you married couples know each other so well that you can complete each other's sentences, predict each other's actions, and anticipate one another's needs.
- Secondly though, the mystery of love is also widened in your lives now by how it has become ever more pure and un-distracted.
 - Partly this happened when you first were married and had to choose another person over yourself.
 - Partly it continued to happen as both of you were called out of yourselves to care for children and grandchildren.
 - But now I think we can all see that your love has been refined even further. The things that clutter our lives – possessions, worries, jobs, and even other friendships – have taken less and less of your attention.
 - St. Paul's teachings on love to the Thessalonians came down much to this point: clear out all the idols, everything that takes up your heart, trust, time, or love, and give it entirely to God, and to those God calls you to love.
 - My dear couples, your long years of marriage, and especially your ever-more-focused love for each other, as God entrusted you to each other, is a witness of this kind of whole-hearted love.

- Today as we celebrate those who have been married five decades or more, it is fitting that we turn to our Blessed Mother and recall the importance of praying for her intercession in the prayers of the rosary.
 - I invite you to pray the rosary together frequently, if not daily, and as you pray the five decades of each rosary, may you offer each decade of the rosary as a prayer of thanksgiving for the five decades or more of married life with which you have been blessed.
- It is with great gratitude that I pray with you and for you here today to celebrate and renew, those promises you made 50 or more years ago.
 - Perhaps you had no idea what you were getting yourself into then, but you have gotten a better idea of love since then, and I thank you for showing all of us, and our world, what God's kind of love looks like.
 - May the Eucharist, which is God's promise of love to us, renew God's kind of love in your hearts, and all of our hearts.
- May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Cf. Fulton Sheen, *Three to Get Married*, Chapter 7: "Unfolding a Mystery," page 71.