



Diocese of Westminster

PRESS RELEASE

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EMBARGOED UNTIL WEDNESDAY 12TH FEBRUARY 2009
Prepare to get married!

With many marriages breaking down or under stress, the Diocese of Westminster is launching 'Engage', a new resource which aims to help engaged couples prepare for married life. The launch is taking place during National Marriage Week (7th-14th February).

The 'Engage' resource is run by married couples, who guide engaged couples through six sessions, each of which addresses a different issue including communication, spiritual intimacy and sex. Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Archbishop of Westminster, said: "Many young people, when expressing their dreams and hopes express the desire to one day be happily married and to have a family. But a successful marriage requires love; a love which comes through kindness, self giving and forgiveness. By integrating Catholic teaching on marriage with a mix of practical wisdom and contemporary relationship psychology, the Engage resource will allow engaged couples in our parishes to prepare better for marriage and to base their marriage on the love of God." You can see a preview video about 'Engage' at <http://www.vimeo.com/3054230>

Originating in Australia, 'Engage' was piloted in the Diocese of Westminster in 2008 and couples responded with enthusiasm. Now the resource is to be made available to all 216 churches in the Diocese. Jason Smith, who, along with his fiancé Alison Anthony, have taken part in an Engage pilot course, said: "'Engage' is beneficial not just for Catholics but also for people marrying into the Catholic faith. It is a worthwhile preparation course en route to marriage."

Bishop Bernard Longley who will officially launch the 'Engage' marriage preparation programme on Wednesday 11th February, said: "'Engage' is an excellent way of underlining the Catholic Church's understanding of marriage. Well-prepared couples entering into the sacrament of marriage have a fantastic contribution to make to the life of the local community and society in general, as well as to the life of the Church."

The course has been introduced to the Diocese of Westminster by Edmund Adamus, Diocesan Director of Pastoral Affairs. He said: "We have been working hard searching 'the market' for good, contemporary, fresh marriage preparation that truly reflects the Catholic teaching for married life and sexuality but which addresses the needs of couples today. Engage fulfils all of these criteria."

ENDS

Notes to editors

- If you would like to interview couples who have prepared for Marriage using 'Engage' or would like any further information please contact Maeve McCormack on 020 7798 9178 or email maevemccormack@rcdow.org.uk
- In order to take part in an 'Engage' course, please contact the Diocese of Westminster Department for Pastoral Affairs on 020 7931 6064 or email cathmacgillivray@rcdow.org.uk
- The Centre for Social Justice recently issued an interim report called 'The Family Law Review' which called for marriage to be preceded by marriage preparation classes.

- The Recent 'The Good Childhood Inquiry' commissioned by the Children's Society was released on 2nd Feb 2009 concluded that family break up was one of the biggest factors in society that was damaging to children.
- Research from the Millennium Cohort Study has shown that married parents are more than twice as likely to stay together than those who are unwed.
- In 2007 over 2500 couples prepared for marriage in Diocese of Westminster while in 2008 the figure rose to over 3000 couples.
- Most young people aspire to marriage; 92% of 15 year olds want to settle down and marry one day (*Sex Under Sixteen, Family Education Trust research report 2000, and Bliss Magazine 2004*)