

'Love lights the diocese' on World Marriage Day



A grand total of 94 area residents filled the sanctuary of Sacred Heart Cathedral on February 8, World Marriage Day.

Michael Necdet Aydogan



Gary and Peggy Siebert, with their three children, turned out for the marriage renewal Mass at Sacred Heart on February 8. The Sieberts have been married 13 years.

Vows renewed at Sacred Heart Mass Sunday, February 8

A happy marriage can be a rewarding "vocation" in itself, according to approximately 90 area residents who turned out Sunday, February 8, to celebrate World Marriage Day.

The local observation of the seven-year-old tradition was marked by a special Mass held at 2 p.m. that Sunday at Sacred Heart Cathedral. Father Ronald Stacey officiated as local couples renewed their vows, flanked by family members who virtually filled the sanctuary in a group outpouring of love and support for the sacrament of marriage.

The diocesan event was sponsored by the Rochester Marriage Encounter community which also held a reception for participants after the Mass. Parishes throughout the diocese were urged to join in the celebration by addressing the subject of marriage in homilies and celebrating marriage renewal Masses at the parish level.

The dream of people celebrating a day of marriage on a national and international level began in 1980. That year, a small group of Marriage Encounter participants gathered in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to discuss ways of emphasizing sacramental values, during what had been proclaimed the "Decade of the Family." The group decided to encourage the mayor of Baton Rouge to proclaim St. Valentine's Day, 1980, as "We Believe in Marriage Day."

The following year, similar proclamations were issued by the bishop of the Baton Rouge Diocese and the governors

of Louisiana and Mississippi. Couples across the two-state area planned and promoted events in shopping centers, public squares and schools. Worldwide Marriage Encounter's national Media Apostolate leadership got wind of the success story, and the Baton Rouge diocesan family life director, took the message to the National Federation of Catholic Family Life Directors.

By 1982, a workbook had been prepared to help other communities design celebrations of "We Believe in Marriage Day." The special day was officially proclaimed by 43 governors and observed in U.S. military bases in seven foreign countries.

With dreams of a multinational observance celebrated across the globe, the planning committee for 1983 changed the event's official title to "World Marriage Day." An increasing ecumenical emphasis marked celebrations that year, and four U.S. cardinals offered Masses at key celebrations and World Marriage Day was observed in 46 states.

"One in Heart" was the theme of the 1984 World Marriage Day Celebration. In addition to securing civic proclamations, organizers redoubled their efforts to obtain proclamations from bishops and other Church leaders. A wide variety of civic celebrations complemented existing religious observances, the most impressive of which was a Mass held at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. Near the end of the Mass, Bishop Joseph O'Keefe read a telegram he had received from Pope John Paul II, praising the efforts of World Marriage Day organizers.

Also in 1984, married couples from across the country submitted "Couple's Proclamations" listing the number of years they had been married. Bound stacks of the proclamations were presented to Archbishop Pio Laghi, the Vatican's Apostolic Delegate to the

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