



Part of the Marriage Jubilee gala on Sunday, Feb. 14 — appropriately St. Valentine's Day — included renewal of marriage vows. Nearly 200 couples from throughout the Diocese of Rochester recalled their anniversaries at the annual celebration which took place at St. Francis DeSales Church in Geneva.

Diocesan ceremony honors anniversarian couples

By Linda Quinlan
For the Courier-Journal

"As long as we stay friends, we can work anything out," says Donna Brown, who with her husband, Darrell, will be celebrating her 15th wedding anniversary on May 26.

The Browns are among almost 200 couples throughout the Diocese of Rochester who recalled their anniversaries at the diocese's annual Marriage Jubilee, which Bishop Matthew H. Clark celebrated this year at St. Francis DeSales Church, Geneva. The date for the gala was this past Sunday, Feb. 14 — appropriately, St. Valentine's Day.

This year, "love was in the air," so to speak, causing Valentine's Day and the diocesan jubilee to coincide with World Marriage Day, which is always held on the second Sunday in February, to be near Valentine's Day.

According to Dee Stemmler of Webster, World Marriage Day was designed "to honor couples as heads of families." Stemmler, her husband, Denny, and Father John Murray of St. John Fisher College make up the diocesan coordinating team for Worldwide Marriage Encounter.

World Marriage Day was initiated in the late 1970s "in response to a group of couples in Louisiana who wanted give marriage a better name ... a better reputation," Dee Stemmler said. Since then, she added, "It has gradually grown to cover all the United States."

In addition to the diocesan Mass celebrated by Bishop Clark, many diocesan parishes also hold special liturgies — even parties and dances — to honor married couples, Stemmler points out.

Some of these parish celebrations are inspired by the liturgical suggestions sent out to parishes by Rick and Joanne Scheffer of St. Elizabeth Anne Seton Parish in Hilton. Coordinators of World Marriage Day, the Scheffers made their first Marriage Encounter weekend in 1983 and are this year celebrating their 18th anniversary.

The theme for World Marriage Day 1988 was "Love is the heart of marriage," which seems to reflect the sentiments of several couples marking anniversaries this year.

The Browns, who took their entire family to the diocesan celebration in Geneva, say they were best friends before they were married and remain so today. Once



Bishop Matthew H. Clark greets one of the couples who participated in the diocese's annual Marriage Jubilee.

high school sweethearts, they now have three children. Donna is a lifelong parishioner of St. Dominic's Church in Shortsville.

Their oldest son, Darrell, 13, is an altar server at St. Dominic's, continuing the family's ties to the parish, and their youngest son, Bryan, 7, will celebrate his first Communion there this spring. Daughter Bridget is 11.

Another couple who will be honored at the diocesan jubilee is Robert and Mary Frascella of Big Flats. Members of St. Mary Our Mother Parish, they are also celebrating 15 years of marriage. They met as students at the University of Dayton and were married in 1973. Originally from

New Jersey and Illinois, respectively, Robert and Mary Frascella have lived in Big Flats for two years, after beginning their married life in St. Louis, Mo. They have three children.

Richard and Rosina Cumbo, who will celebrate their 50th anniversary on May 30, also attended the diocesan jubilee. Richard Cumbo attributes the longevity of their marriage to "common sense ... and a life that's been as pleasant as possible. We never have arguments," he remarked, "we just went along."

Both natives of Rochester, the Cumbos met in the 1930s when they shared the same route walking to work. Members of

St. Francis of Assisi Parish, they have lived in their Campbell Street home during most of their married lives and have three children.

Also among the couples honored at the diocesan marriage jubilee were Arthur and Mary Heisler of Creek Street in Penfield, who are celebrating their 70th anniversary this year.

Whether celebrating World Marriage Day or participating in the diocesan jubilee Mass with Bishop Clark, marriage was certainly on many people's minds this St. Valentine's Day. After all, says Joanne Scheffer, "the day is meant to honor all marriages."