**Homework …..Questions which you need to be able to discuss based on these notes.**

**How does marriage continue the mission people were given when they were baptised? Can you explain how the married couple give each other the sacrament of marriage through a promise , a challenge and a celebration?**

Through the Sacrament of Baptism, all Christians are called to share in the mission of Jesus. Jesus’ mission was to make known God’s love for everyone and show people that living in God’s way brings love, justice and peace for the entire world. There are many different ways of carrying out this mission. God calls each of us to a particular vocation in life. The word

‘vocation’ means ‘calling’ – that is responding to the call of Jesus and involves commitment.

The sacraments of Marriage and Holy Orders are sacraments that celebrate a way of life people feel called to in order to carry out the mission they were given in baptism. Each sacrament deepens the relationship with God that began in baptism. These sacraments consecrate, that is, make holy, the love and self-giving of the wife and husband and the ordained priest so that they become signs of Christian love and self-giving for the whole Church.

For some people the living out of the commitment to love and service will be through marriage. In baptism the bride and groom were consecrated (set apart) as children of God and called to dedicate their lives to him: their marriage is their way of living out that commitment.

The heart of every wedding ceremony is the exchange of vows. In the sacrament of marriage, the exchange of vows between the couple, a man and a woman, at least one of whom is baptised, is surrounded by symbolic words, symbols and ceremonies, which together make up what is called the Rite of Marriage. Sacraments make Christ present among us. Christ is already present in the love which the couple share. In celebrating the sacrament, Christ’s presence is publically declared before the community and the priest, the Church’s minister (see page 1 for more on what a sacrament is and below for an outline of the Rite).

Couples who choose to get married by celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage come seeking God’s blessing on their love for one another, and to pray that God will be with them on their journey through life. In exchanging their vows the couple give to each other a sacrament, which is a promise, a challenge and a celebration. The sacrament is:

**a promise** that the loving power of God will strengthen and support the couple in their life together, so that, through their love of each other they will find peace, joy and fulfilment. Marriage is given by God as a means for a man and woman to find happiness together;

**a challenge** to the couple to grow as people of love so that their love will be a sign to the world of God’s love for God’s people. The Church, in fact is often called the ‘bride of Christ’ as the love of a married couple is the image of the love God offers God’s people. This is the calling or the vocation of married people and it is by responding to God’s call to love that they fulfil their vocation;

**a celebration** that all love comes from God and that to live in love is to share in the life of God. Love is always there to be shared so marriage is also given by God so that a couple may be open to the possibility of sharing their love with children.

THE NUPTIAL BLESSING
Whether the marriage is celebrated within Mass or outside, the Lord's Prayer always has its place. The placing of the Nuptial Blessing here is deliberate, symbolising by this sacrament the couple will (usually) come to share in this parenthood of God when they themselves become parents. The priest then prays that the couple's marriage may be blessed, that the couple will be faithful to each other, be an example of Christian life. The priest asks that they will be blessed with children and be good parents and, that at the end of their lives they will have everlasting life in Heaven with all the saints. The blessing ends with these words:

*Father, keep them always true to your commandments. Keep them faithful in marriage and let them be examples of Christian life. Give them the strength which comes from the Gospel so that they may be witnesses of Christ to others. Bless them with children and help them to be good parents. May they live to see their children’s children. And after a happy old age, grant them fullness of life with the Saints in the kingdom of heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord*. Everyone responds, *“Amen.”*

*(Links could be made here to John 13 and the command to love another or the scripture covered in the topic ‘Mission’ last year about being witnesses and spreading the good news which the couple now do through marriage).*