

## **Launch of Accord survey: *Married Life – the First 7 Years***

- **Marriage is for love, commitment is for life**
- **98% of couples intend to remain married to the same person for the rest of their lives**

**“The sacredness of the marriage relationship is at the heart of the Christian understanding of marriage” - Bishop Willie Walsh**

Bishop Willie Walsh, the Bishop of Killaloe and President of Accord, the Catholic Marriage Care Service, today launched survey findings based on responses from 712 couples on the first seven years of marriage. The launch of the survey, which was commissioned by Accord and undertaken by Amárach Consulting, took place in Dublin.

Bishop Walsh said: “This survey is clearly good news about marriage. It reassures us that the deeply felt human need for a life long loving relationship – which is marriage – is alive and well.”

### **Some key findings from the surveyed couples include:**

- 98% of couples intend to remain married to the same person for the rest of their lives.
- 86% of couples would recommend marriage to another couple intending to marry.
- 77% of couples are very happy with their marriage.
- 63% agree strongly that their relationship has strengthened since they married.
- 73% strongly believe that fathers are as important as mothers in the proper development of children.
- 58% of couples live with their spouse before marriage.
- 73% of couples agree strongly that their spouse makes them smile or laugh.
- 93% of the children of married couples surveyed are born after marriage.
- 7 out of 10 couples believe that they are moderately or very religious.
- Average age at marriage is rising and was 32 years among couples surveyed.

Also speaking at the launch, the National Director of Accord, Mr Shay Ellis, said: “Our survey *Married Life – the First 7 Years* is the first comprehensive study of its kind undertaken in Ireland. The research analyses attitudes underpinning courtship, cohabitation, relationships, marriage and family size. It also looks at money, overall happiness, and the role of the Church and State in supporting recently married couples.”

Mr Ellis continued: “The survey describes the attitudes of newly married couples to marriage, with all the responsibilities that come with that. Modern married couples face the challenge of rearing families and working outside the home.”

“Despite these pressures young married couples see marriage as the best way to have and raise children, with both of them vital to their child’s wellbeing,” said Mr Ellis.

Commenting further Bishop Walsh said: “The challenge for all of us is to work for a society which truly cares for marriage and family. Loving families are not only good for the members of that family; they are also good for the wellbeing of our whole society.

“The survey’s finding that more than three out of four couples are very happy with their marriage is indeed good news. It is also heartening that the majority of couples agree that their relationship of love has strengthened since their marriage. The survey results are welcome news for all of those who work to support marriage and the family.

“While one in four couples describe themselves as ‘not at all religious’ the majority claim to be ‘moderately religious’ and attend religious service either regularly or occasionally. These figures indicate that while religious practice has declined among recently married couples, the scale of the decline is not as extreme as sometimes suggested by commentators in the media. This surely is a source of encouragement to us as priests who are involved in the pastoral care of marriage as sacrament.”

Bishop Walsh concluded: “Whilst this survey was not confined to Catholic couples, the sacredness of the marriage relationship is at the heart of the Christian understanding of marriage.”

**ENDS**

### **Notes to Editors**

➤ **Methodology:**

- Accord commissioned Amárach Consulting to design and conduct the survey;
  - A total of 712 couples throughout Ireland – or 1,424 individuals – were surveyed in April and May 2006 using a self completion questionnaire issued to each spouse;
  - Participants in the survey remained anonymous;
  - The survey covered the following headings: getting married, happiness, parenting, family roles; problem areas, religion, and government.
  - To participate in the survey couples had to be married for the first time in the seven years 1999 to 2005.
  - The survey is confined to those who are still married and so by definition it excludes those who married between 1999 and 2005 but then separated or divorced.
- The report on the survey *Married Life – the First 7 Years* is available on [www.accord.ie](http://www.accord.ie)
- **ACCORD**, the Catholic Marriage Care Service, is the biggest and most geographically widespread provider of services in support of marriage and family in Ireland. With 58 centres countrywide, Accord members deliver over 54,000 client contact hours annually. Accord’s mission is to respond to the needs of couples preparing for and living out their commitment to marriage and family.
- **ACCORD** serves the pastoral needs of marriage and the family. **ACCORD** is an agency of the Catholic Church and provides a nationwide service to couples preparing for or seeking a deeper commitment to traditional marriage and family values and

structures. All services provided by ACCORD's 800 plus volunteers through its 58 centres are confidential, delivered by professionally trained and highly skilled practitioners who demonstrate the personal qualities and competences required to carry out this very important work. Each of our volunteers delivers at least 100 hours of service per year which demonstrates their commitment to all aspects of our work.

- **www.gettingmarried.ie** is a joint initiative of ACCORD and Catholic Ireland.net and was launched by Bishop Willie Walsh, in December 2005. The website gives details of the state and church regulations and the various documents needed in preparation for the wedding day and where they can be obtained. Of particular interest are the essential steps in the marriage preparation journey which is available on the website in a timeline format. The website provides a wedding booklet facility, which allows couples to create their marriage booklet online. There is a frequently asked questions section covering some of the many questions that couples have when they are preparing for marriage.