

A Day of Encouragement

I hope to *encourage* you today, said Mgr Donnelly, Vicar-General of the Brentwood diocese, as he came to address the AIF winter meeting at Heythrop on the 'pastoral care of interchurch couples'.

It was indeed an encouraging day. We caught the vision of God as Creator who is creating all the time. We saw the family unit as the first sign to us of God's presence in the world, for the first way we experience the *unconditional* love of God is in the touch and voice of our mother and father. We saw marriage in its natural reality and above all in its sacramental aspect: the joining together of two anointed and consecrated people - woman and man together in marriage as a manifestation of the Trinity. We were reminded that marriage is for mutual sustaining, healing and enabling of growth.

We saw the particular richness and suffering of interchurch marriages in the *now* of today's church - affected by past history but able to affect tomorrow. We saw our marriages as for one another - of course - but also for our churches, and even beyond that, for our world.