

B.C. couples celebrate 6,700 years of marriage at Anniversary Mass

More than one thousand people burst into applause as Rose and Frank Krentz received a certificate in honour of their 70th anniversary.

They were one of 225 couples who, with their families, filled St. Matthew's Parish in Surrey on May 13 in celebration of a total of 6,700 years of marriage.

"You, dear friends, are a shining example of the power of faith and of the willing acceptance to embrace Jesus' example of selfless, sacrificial love for each other," Archbishop J. Michael Miller told couples celebrating anniversaries in five-year increments from five years to 60-plus years.

"You are here this afternoon because of sacrifice, selflessness, love, and faith. Thank you for bearing witness to the rest of us of the beauty and joy of the vocation to marriage."

The couples renewed their marriage vows and picked up certificates honouring their lifetime commitments to each other that day. Special guests included 19 couples married for 60 years or more.

"I thought it was wonderful," Rose said of the celebration. She met Frank at a wedding more than 70 years ago. Now, they have 11 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren, and recently celebrated Frank's 90th birthday

"You walk into a marriage and it's a journey. It's a lot of time, a lot of years, a lot of roads, ups and downs, good weather, bad weather, sunshine, it's lovely. It's an experience of a lifetime," Rose said.

"You don't know it unless you walk it. I hope everyone else can find their way through it, with a lot of help. We've had a lot of help from above."

Lucille and Raymond Decloux, married 60 years ago, were thrilled that Archbishop Miller wanted to publicly honour so many anniversaries.

"You know what happens after 30 years or so? You sort of stop celebrating, because my goodness, it can't be happening! So it's a good thing to do, to remind our kids, other people, and to remind ourselves that it's a long time, but it's been a good time," said Raymond.

When they were young, he and Lucille had attended all-boys and all-girls

schools and only met after an introduction by a mutual friend. Now, 60 years later, they have four children, eight grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren.

"It's hard to believe, because our parents died in their 60s, which was normal that many years ago. So, we thought if we got to 45 or 50 years, that would be pretty good! But 60 years? We never thought."

Neysa Finnie and Gord Brown, married 10 years, were also happy with the public showing of support for marriage.

"Archbishop Miller, we thank you as our spiritual leader for making the strengthening of marriages and families one of the archdiocesan Priorities and Goals," Finnie said after Mass.

"Your presence here today with us and your blessing of our marriages give public witness and personal affirmation of the sanctity of marriage and family."

During the reception, *The B.C. Catholic* caught up with the Krentz pair to ask for advice for how to stay married for 70 years. "You have to respect and be kind to that person," said Rose, laughing, "even if you sometimes don't want to."

Organizers hope to make the Marriage Anniversary Mass, held for the first time in the Archdiocese of Vancouver, an annual event.