

**GENERAL SYNOD 2012**

**THE CHURCH OF IRELAND MARRIAGE COUNCIL REPORT**

**Proposed by the Revd Arthur Barrett, Diocese of Clogher**

**EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Your Grace, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to present the Report of the Church of Ireland Marriage Council.

We have heard a lot about Marriage in this Synod already, so you may be glad to hear, that it is not my intention to discuss the definition of Marriage, nor it's legal or canonical meanings any further.

I would however like to commend the work of the Marriage Council to the House. All who work in the pastoral care of others are well aware of the many and varied difficulties which relationships, and especially marriage can encounter. The current economic challenges can place even further and greater pressures on the marriage partnership.

The Marriage Council seeks to provide resources, counselling and advice to couples who are married, who are preparing for marriage, and to clergy who are caring for them.

The Report outlines the very effective work that is being done by the Council. I would however, wish to strongly encourage all Dioceses to take up the offers of assistance and support that are given by the Council.

Such as the Contemporary Couples Training Course which seeks to provide clergy with resources to help them deal with couples who are experiencing marriage difficulties.

Also in the Republic, the availability of professional Counsellors for Marriage Counselling and Marriage Preparation. It is a shame that while the demand for Marriage Counselling is growing, our budget for providing such services is being reduced.

We have also sought to roll out a number of retreats for clergy across the dioceses, but these do need the active encouragement and support of each diocese. While we are very conscious of budgets being squeezed more and more, we do believe that this area of support to both clergy and lay people, is of extreme importance.

It is my pleasure to recommend the Report of the Marriage Council.