



### WORLD MARRIAGE DAY

Congratulations and good wishes to all of you who are married. The following article was taken from a *Christopher Notes* titled *Making Marriage Work*.

**Marriage . . .** May be compared to a great tree growing right up through the center of one's living room... It is huge...and wherever one happens to be going-to-the fridge, to the bathroom, or out the front door the tree has to be taken into account.

To be married is to be confronted intimately day after day with the mystery of life, of other life, of life outside of oneself... Marriage is one of the great steps we can take in the direction of choosing for ourselves... the closeness of God, in the form of a close relationship with another person.

It is in the details-the little things that are the warp and woof of daily life-that one touches God. And it is in the details that married couples meet the four major challenges facing them:

- Keeping an intimate relationship.
- Dealing with the inevitable changes.
- Handling conflict in a loving way.
- Managing family finances.

#### Keeping intimacy

Intimacy is the courtship continued. It is the glue of marriage, holding the structure together. Intimacy is more than a satisfactory sexual relationship, although such a relationship is integral to it. It is the sum of all the little things that enable one person to respond to another in sickness and in health, in good times and in bad because there is enjoyment in being together.

**Unfortunately, intimacy is easily lost through neglect and indifference. The result is isolation and loneliness.**

A widower writing to Ann Landers expressed regrets that he so often ignored his wife's plea to "please come home early." "Now that she's gone, I've found the time to 'come home early,' but there is nobody to come home to. There is nobody to do those simple little things with, such as watching the evening news, listening to music and reading the paper."

Once lost, intimacy can be regained by those courtship techniques that tell the other, "I love you in a special way."

#### . . . intimate moments . . .

- Sitting on the beach watching the tides wash sand castles away, Sue Monk Kidd had the feeling her

marriage was awash also. Sensing her unease, her husband asked what was wrong. She confessed her fear that they were taking their marriage for granted. That night, walking along the beach, they renewed their wedding vows.

- Joe and Juanita Altschuler of Liburn, GA., had been married for 23 years when they made a Marriage Encounter, a weekend retreat for couples. The experience, they said, "brought us back to the excitement we felt in the earlier years of our marriage." (If interested in more information about a Marriage Encounter Weekend, call Pat & Liz Pinchera, 255-9463.)
- Rafael and Margarita Chavez of Colorado, when asked the secret of their 65-year marriage confided, "Prayer, prayer and more prayer." The couple say the rosary together in the morning and the evening, praying not only for their own needs but for the most pressing needs of others.

#### Living with change

**The growth** of love is not a straight line but a series of hills and valleys...Sometimes these desert lines are simply the only way to the next oasis, which is far more lush and beautiful after the desert crossing than it could possibly have been without it.

Five years after her marriage, Mary B. Hawley of Wisconsin made this observation: "Married life has been a series of changes, adjustments and realizations. The romance is not gone, but it has changed." Your marriage stands a better chance of succeeding if you understand that change is inevitable and constructive change is essential.

#### ...patterns of change...

- Not all change is good. Sometimes one partner may become too engrossed in parenting or in making money, and the marital relationship deteriorates. When this happens, therapists advise couples to act immediately to become "reacquainted" and revitalize intimacy.
- Change can be encouraged. Through good example or words of praise, one partner can inspire the other, according to Edwin and Sally Kiester in *Reader's Digest*. They tell how one man lacking in confidence developed it because his wife never missed an opportunity to praise him for acting with assurance. "I became someone I never could have become without her," he said.

- Prayer is necessary. A divorcee, writing about her successful marriage to a divorced alcoholic, gave this as the formula that helped their family: "Prayers, a sense of commitment, prayers, respect for each other and our children, prayers, knowing when to instruct and when to listen, prayers and always standing together."

### **Coping with conflict**

**Conflict** is a sign that a marriage is alive. Conflict is the arena where growth in a relationship can take. Just as change is inevitable in marriage, so is conflict. Like change, conflict can be a means of growth-or disintegration.

**According to a study published in the Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, couples who learn to argue well are more likely to have happier marriages than those who repress differences.**

As long-term marrieds testify, disputes can develop over matters unimportant as well as important. A Connecticut couple, Patrick and Diane Brennan, confesses that one of their first arguments was about the right way to fold towels when they came out of the dryer.

When dealing with conflict, remember the following:

- Be specific. State the real reason for your anger, annoyance or disappointment rather than expecting your spouse to figure it out.
- Listen. Put aside your own feelings and emotions as best you can and try to really listen to what your spouse is saying. Understanding is basic to reconciliation.
- Choose an appropriate time and place. And it's never a good idea to argue if one or both of you have been drinking.
- Keep things in perspective. "You're two people trying to settle into one life, and until you see that sometimes even quarreling can make you closer...you can't really know what true joy is," says Natalie Wood of Maine, married for 39 years.
- Forgive. Extend forgiveness to your spouse if you've been hurt; ask for it if you caused the hurt. "If you're going to talk about change in marriage, you've got to talk about forgiveness," says Will Willimon of Duke University Divinity School.

### **Managing money**

**People** think talking about money is cold and calculated. It may not be romantic but you have to talk...about everything: inheritances, stocks, bonds, checking accounts. Everything.

Judith Siegel of Northwestern University believes money is a hot issue because it "is the most visible symbol of self-worth" to many people. Disputes about money, she says, are frequently struggles over power.

There is also the need for a feeling of independence and equality. One woman, a banker, remembers that her mother had to ask her father for money whenever it was needed. Says she, "I never, ever, want to have to grovel for money."

**....be realistic...**

- Structure your own system. What works for one family might not work for another. Mississippians William and Marilyn Gardner decided on a salary for her when she gave up her job to raise their children.
- Provide independence. Whether there are joint accounts, separate accounts or some combination, each partner should have access to some funds to spend as he or she sees fit.
- Agree on the essentials. No major expenditures ought to be undertaken without agreement. Whether to take expensive vacations or invest in a house depends on joint priorities.
- Communicate. Each spouse must understand the family financial situation and the things he or she would need to know hips.
- Put money in perspective. Says Rita Super of Bolingbrook, Ohio: "Material goods are not that important...To have my infant son smile at me - you can't put a dollar figure on that."

Couples need to remember one other thing: in every good marriage there is another partner-God. Promises to love and cherish are made before God and His help is available to those struggling with the little things that make a marriage.

Says Diane Medved, author of "The Case Against Divorce": "That's something you can hang onto when it gets tough, which it inevitably does. God's hand is involved. God has a stake in your marriage too."

**Marriage**, at times, seems like the tree John and Beatrice Challiss planted in the yard of their Los Angeles home. The tree lost its leaves and then its branches and "stood like a pipe driven into the ground, a total failure for all to see," according to Beatrice Challiss.

But John Challiss drilled 10 holes for deep root irrigation all around the tree and drew a map showing the location of the holes. They watered and fertilized each year and the tree grew. It became central to their family life and celebrations, with children playing around it and even being married under it. Now it is enjoyed by grandchildren.

Marriage too can be spindly at the start but it flourishes when lovingly nurtured and given over to God's care.

### **A married couple's prayer**

*Lord, we are sorry and we ask your forgiveness that sometimes we show lack of respect, and understanding and love: That we neglect each other by neglecting to pray for each other; that we have often spoiled the*

*perfect relationship you planned for us; and yet we also want to thank you for the happiness we have known together, for the sadness we have faced together, for the problems we are overcoming together, for the love which you give us which is completely unspoiled. Amen.*  
Christopher Idle

**Reflection Questions:** What spoke to you most in the above article? Is there something in the article that you would like to talk to your spouse more about?

Please share this column with a neighbor, co-worker, friend or family living elsewhere. They can access it from our parish web page: [www.ascensioncatholic.net](http://www.ascensioncatholic.net).

### **GOSPEL: Luke 6:17, 20-26**

Listening to Luke's list of blessings and woes is a good example of how we need the help of guides with it comes to reading some parts of the scripture. Let's now look briefly at each of the four sets of blessings and woes.

*Blessed are the poor... and woe to the rich*

The poor are not blest because they are materially destitute. Rather, they are blest because they are able to place their trust in God in the midst of poverty. They are blest because God is on their side. The rich are not cursed simply because they are materially well off, but because of their failure to come to the rescue of the poor by generously sharing their blessings with them. They are having their reward *now*, but they will lose out big time in the reign of God.

*Blessed are the hungry, . . . woe to the full*

Jesus is not saying it's a blessing to be starving and a curse to have a good meal. He is saying we are blessed if we can keep trusting in God in empty/hungry times. Also, it is a blessing if we are hungry for God. It is a curse if our "plenty" times lead us to ignore God. It is a curse to be spiritually self-satisfied.

*Blessed are you if weeping, . . . woe if laughing*

It is a blessing if we mourn for our sins and for the injustices in our world and for the losses we experience in life. It is not a curse to be happy. But it is a curse if our laughter is a cover-up for our sadness and if it is at the expense of others. Some become rich at the expense of others.

*Blessed are you if people hate you . . . woe if people speak well of you*

We are blessed if people reject us because of our love for Jesus. On the other hand, it is a curse to be spoken well of in a world that rejects Jesus.

Poverty, hunger, tears and rejection are *not* to be sought after. But if they come to us as a result of our following Jesus, then they are blessings. God can turn poverty, hunger, tears and rejection into blessings. We see this when people in bad times turn to God and convert to his ways. On the other hand, a good financial portfolio could lead to our spiritual demise. Finally, the beatitudes only

make sense to one who has fully embraced the ways of Jesus. To the rest, they are nonsense.

### **How to Forgive Yourself & Others Revised and Expanded**

In 1985, I wrote my first version of *How to Forgive Yourself & Other*. In 1992—I revised and expanded it. This past year the editors at Liguori kindly allowed me to do a second revision and expansion. The book has been almost totally rewritten. Some of the chapter titles are:

What Forgiveness Is and Isn't, Three Reasons to Forgive, 13 Truths to Remember about the Forgiveness Process, Ten Obstacles to Forgiving Life's Hurts, How Prayer can Help Us to Forgive Others (living & deceased), Self, Church and God. Copies of this newly revised and expanded booklet will be on sale next weekend. The focus of next week's gospel is forgiving one's enemies. Three other books which are also presently on our *discount book* table are: ***This Blessed Mess*, Patricia Livingston**. In her introduction to the book, Pat writes: This is a book about struggle. It is about how struggle overtakes us without our permission. It is about what lies within struggle and beyond it. It is about what we can do with struggle and what it can do with us. Material for this book has been gathering in me for thirty-five years, since I first faced reality as a young adult and strained to comprehend the dynamics of life's difficulty.

I write out of my experience, recognizing clearly that my life has been far less painful than the lives of so many around the world and across time. This book is simply an expression of my effort to understand my own events, shared in the hope that it might speak to the lives of others.

The book offers practical ways of how to deal with life's messiness and struggle. Cost: \$15 on sale for \$10.

### ***The Fabric Friendship, Celebrating the Joys, Mending the Tears in Women's Relationships, Joy Carol***

Some of the chapter titles are: Our Sisters, Our Partners in Friendship, Working Well with Women, Surviving through Friendships, and Ten Steps to Better Friendships. Two of the reviewers of the book write: "An illuminating book . . . Fresh, honest, exuberant and sometimes painful. A wonderful read for women you and old and in-between." "Reading *The Fabric of Friendship* will give you a new perspective and better understanding of the vulnerability, validity and power of women's friendships." \$16 book on sale for \$10.

### ***Live, Laugh and Be Blessed—Finding Humor in Holiness in Everyday Moments, Anne Smollin***

In her introduction, the author writes: It's never too late to be happy, to be kind and to be more fully alive . . . It is not hard to find joy in life and grasp the beauty of the moment. It's a choice we can make. . . People spend so much time worrying about getting old that they get old.

If you are looking for an upbeat book filled with great quotes, great stories, this is your book. Perhaps you know someone who needs a book that will give them a lift. One of the stories Ann tells is:

*There is a story about a troubled old man. Life seemed to hand him one jolt after another, but he faced each obstacle with a smile and a cheery disposition.*

*An acquaintance of the man finally asked him how he managed to stay so happy despite his hardships.*

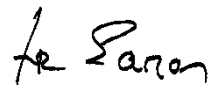
*The old man quickly answered: "Well, the bible often says, 'And it came to pass', but never once does it say, 'It come to stay.'"*

Then she adds:

Perhaps we should remember that LAUGHTER:

Lightens the load;  
Avoids negativity;  
Unites hearts;  
Gathers people together;  
Heals heartache;  
Tickles the soul;  
Energizes the human spirit; and  
Restores us to wholeness and holiness.

Have a blessed week,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Le Saron". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.