



Of Seeds and Flowers

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Married, Or Just Together?

One of my favorite stories tells of the meeting of two hermits, Father Daniel and Father Joseph. Father Daniel asked what else he must do to be perfect. He said that he ate little, slept little, prayed without ceasing, worked always with his hands and shared whatever he had with the poor. What, he wondered, did he lack? Then Father Joseph rose and stretched out his arms, tongues of fire flashed from his fingers. "If you want," he said, "you can become a living flame."

To be so in touch with love, life, the fiery Spirit of God, that this love, life and Spirit would come forth like fire from the tips of your fingers... WOW! Just the thought of it leaves me breathless!

This should be the dream, the call, the deepest desire of all bishops, priests, all ministers of God and indeed, ALL MARRIED COUPLES. The sacrament of marriage, the sacrament of coupleness, is the Church's most unreleased energy and the best kept secret. The most serious vocation crisis in the Catholic Church today is not the shortage of vocations to the male celibate priesthood; it is a shortage of vocations to the sacrament of Matrimony. - the sacrament of intimate passionate love. Release the power of this sacrament and all kinds of new life, including religious vocations, will be

born.

Marriage is the sacrament of intimacy; the sacrament of full passionate love; the sacrament of deep oneness of heart and spirit and body; the sacrament that symbolizes the union of Christ and His Church.

Do you know how much Jesus Christ wants to love you? It is like asking, "Do you know how close your body is to your heart?" "Do you know how one you are with your spirit?" That's how close Jesus Christ wants to be with you. That's how close my relationship with my wife, Cindy, must become. "You are no longer two, but one flesh." (one spirit).



Married people are called to **intimacy**, not "just relationship" or "just sex" or "being best friends" or "the significant other", but to INTIMACY. Total union, total openness, totally vulnerability, totally giving, total forgiveness, total love. A wild commitment to deep intimacy at all levels of existence. -intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical.

Married people are called to explode into each other; to shatter into a million pieces. And then to have the Lord pull all of those pieces

back together into a new creation.

Pieces of the one person fall into the pieces of the other person and a new and deeper individual and coupleness is created. Jesus said, "Lose yourself in Me and you will find new life." The same is true when we lose ourselves in another human being. We discover who we are; we become who we really are by losing ourselves in the other. It is a crazy paradox, but it's true. It works.

I know many married couples who could do this but hold back or are too busy about "more important things" that they have left the most important thing undone.

We know by instinct by nature (by going green) that this is right but we can't do it because our lives have become so unspiritual. The world and things and busyness have taken over our hearts and our happiness, - our marriages! How can we convince married couples that they are supposed to be going about shining like the sun not just "going about?"

Make growth in your marriage a priority.

1. Hold each other often and for long periods of time. - in quiet, or maybe as you watch television for an hour or so. God knew how screwed up we would be and how much hugging we would need to convince us that we are good.

2. Spend an hour from time to time and trace the way a given fault has moved and expressed itself throughout your life. e.g. fear, anger, lying, pride, greed, lust, etc..

3. At the end of each day, after reflection, tell each other what was the happiest and saddest moment of the day and why.

4. Always try to **greet each other eye to eye, heart to heart** recognizing that this is my beloved, my brother, my sister in whom God dwells.

5. Regularly, celebrate the love you have for each other sexually. Let your love be expressed freely; be built up fully. Be fully human.

6. Spend time contemplating the goodness, the beauty of your spouse.

7. Your spouse is the child of the Father; he or she is the apple of His eye. Treat your spouse the way the Father wants His child treated.

8. Pray for each other. "Lord, thank you for the privilege of being married to her. Help me to love him more fully; to love him into fullness. Teach me how to be wife, to love, to forgive, to listen, not to judge, not to manipulate, to be affectionate, etc.. If you are too busy to pray **you are too darn busy.**

9. Make the other number one in your life. I don't want to hear about all of the things you are doing for others, the community, the church, etc.. If you are not meeting the needs of the one that God has given to you, than you are doing the wrong things, no matter how noble they might seem.

Let's stop wondering how we can change the nation, the world, great institutions. Rather, let's change what we can change, namely, ourselves and the world will stop and look and learn. **TRANSFORMED PEOPLE, TRANSFORM PEOPLE.**

The philosopher William James once wrote, "I am done with great

things and big things, great institutions and big success, and I am for those tiny invisible molecular moral forces that work from individual to individual, creeping through the crannies of the world like so many rootlets, or like the capillary oozing of water, yet which, if you give them time, will rend the hardest monuments of man's pride."

Release the power! Release the power in your marriage by not being satisfied with anything less than full intimacy. Raise the love and power in your marriage to the "power of two". Think of your marriage as a "committee of two" called to change the world by first changing yourselves. As you release the power and join other married couples doing the same, wonderful things will begin to happen. Remember the words of Father Joseph, "If you want, you can become a living flame. Stretch out your arms and tongues of fire will flash from your fingers." Let's do it!!



Woman was created from the rib
of man
not from his head was she created
to be above him.
Nor from his feet
to be trampled upon

She was created
From his side -
to be equal to him:
From under his arm -
to be protected by him:
From close to his heart -
to be loved by him.

Vision and Reality

Why Go to Church?



A churchgoer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. "I've gone to church each Sunday for 30 years now," he wrote, "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time and the pastor is wasting his by giving sermons at all."

This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column, much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher. "I've been married for 30 years now. In that time, my wife has cooked some 30,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of these meals. But I do know this. They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!"

Most people spend the first half of their lives being religious. –going to church, keeping the rules, “saying their prayers”, receiving the sacraments, helping at the church bazaar, collecting for the poor etc. All very, very good things, to be commended and recommended.

And then, some people (not most) spend the second half of their lives being spiritual. Sadly, this “further journey” is a well kept secret. Many people do not know that there is one. And the truth is: If you don’t spend the first half of your life doing the above “religious practices” you probably won’t spend the second half of your life working at your spiritual life. (a good reason to keep the kids going to church.) Most of us spend the first half of our lives trying to fool ourselves and God and most of us get real good at it. We are always selling God our plans and then pretending that they came from Him.

Your spiritual life **only begins** when you discover your own hypocrisy (all of those cleverly and carefully built false motivations) and begin the process of dying to self, and rising in genuine inner transformation. Truly choosing Jesus as Savior and Lord, allowing THE Spirit to run free in your life, making God number one, developing a contemplative, transforming prayer life. Humans are always in need of more light and enlightenment about themselves and the endless mystery of God. God invites the imprisoned to “come out” and makes it safe for those with dark interiors to “show themselves. “Anyone who wants to save his life, must lose it. Anyone who loses her life will find it. What gain is there if you win the whole world and lose your very self?” Matthew 16:25-26. A journey into the second half of our lives awaits us all. “Falling Upward” by Richard Rohr is recommended if you want to find out about the second half.

Late have I loved you, O
Beauty so ancient and yet so
new, late have I loved you.
You were inside me all the
time, but I was scurrying
around outside looking for you
everywhere. Confused, I threw
myself this way and that,
drawn by the beauty of your
creation. You were always
inside me. But I was not
always in you. Created things
kept me from you. But you
shouted and shouted and
finally made me hear. Your
blazing light finally made me
see. Your fragrance finally
came to me, and now I pant
for you. I tasted your sweetness
at last, and now I hunger and
thirst for only you. You touched
me, and now I am on fire.
And so shall I be for the rest
of my life. - AUGUSTINE



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Speaking Softly

THEY STILL NEED FIXING

I've spent 48 years and thousands of hours counseling, pastoring and offering spiritual direction. I have come to a not-so-obvious but compelling conclusion: Much of our helping is like hoping for first class accommodations on the Titanic. Immediate problems are often fixed; marriage emergencies avoided, personal problems identified and helped, spiritual direction, as far as the person wants to go etc. etc.. It feels good at the moment but it seldom seems to go far enough. There is a hole in the hull of the ship that is below the water line not being addressed and then we are surprised when people complain, drown or resort to life boats. The fact is most people I have tried to fix still need fixing. The immediate problem was handled; the situation changed, but the core, the cause of the problem was never touched and the deep healing needed was never achieved.

What is the core? And how do we touch it? If we can find the answers to these questions, we are coming close to what the world religions and churches mean by true ministry. True ministry is unlike any other form of helping. It has many disguises and counterfeits. What Jesus was talking about was the ABSOLUTE HELP, which alone is worthy of the name-the radical, deep down help that **none of us can give to another**. WE CAN ONLY POINT TO IT AND PROMISE THAT IT IS THERE. And, in a way, isn't this the first and only work of true religion?

Call it grace, enlightenment, transformation, epiphany, baptism in the Spirit, revelation, surrender; but until such a threshold is walked through, people are never fully helped in any true, lasting sense. This RADICAL GRACE will ultimately lead you to a life of contemplative prayer. Silence is God's first and transforming language. "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it remains only a grain of wheat, but if it dies it will produce much fruit." Some ideas from "Radical Grace" by Richard Rohr.

