Column: Marriage and the Family

A Couple’s Faith Journey

by Em Bataille

I...urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love.

-Ephesians 4:1-2

M y wife and I are “do-overs”. However, without the back story of our previous marriages we could not have arrived at the place we are today. We followed the Church’s proscribed path of seeking an annulment for our previous marriages in order to be married in the Catholic Church. The process was complicated in many ways, but also cathartic. It forced us to consider the good and bad of our previous relationships. We had to face the reality of what we contributed to the dysfunction and ultimate demise of those relationships. This is a healthy exercise for the mind and soul.

We knew we wanted to be married in the Catholic Church. However, Carol was not Catholic. To her credit she was willing to follow the RCIA process to be accepted into the Catholic Church. What started as a matter of form began our journey of faith. Not only did Carol learn the beauty of Catholicism, but so did I. She asked questions I could not answer. We sought the answers together. As a cradle Catholic, I relearned my faith. The Easter Vigil service when Carol was welcomed into the Catholic Church was a powerful and moving experience. This may have been the first time I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life. Needless to say, there were real life guardian angels whose faith and personal lives inspired us. Sometimes, we need help hearing the whispers of the Holy Spirit.

I never realized there could be a spiritual bond between a husband and wife. This is perhaps the most important bond for any couple to share. It is the bond that will allow a couple to fully enjoy life’s beautiful moments and survive its most difficult times. The Easter Vigil is a beautiful and moving ritual for those journeying to join the Catholic faith tradition. It appears that many of those attending the Vigil service have had a personal experience with the ritual that keeps them coming back to celebrate the faith journey of others. So it is with Carol and I. We vividly remember her first Easter Vigil. The presence of the Holy Spirit is palpable and energizing in the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation. That presence seems to take on a deeper meaning when a loved one is receiving those sacraments for the first time. That commitment to share in each other’s faith journey is an awe inspiring personal spiritual experience.

The joy of that first Easter Vigil with Carol has continued. My wife and I have been actively involved in our parish’s RCIA ministry for eight plus years. We started out as sponsors and moved to being facilitators for the candidates and catechumens teaching sessions. We are attracted to the blessings of this ministry. It is humbling, inspiring,

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and renewing to walk along side fellow faith travelers. To share in another’s faith journey is powerful. This shared ministry reinforces the joy of our own personal faith journey. I never tire of receiving the Holy Eucharist with my wife. Her faith journey was a gift that has blessed our marriage.

One never knows the impact of a life lived. However, Carol and I can say we are practicing our faith to the best of our abilities with a commitment to a life lived according to St Paul’s exhortation to the Ephesians. Not only did Carol and I grow together through her reception into the Church on the Easter Vigil, but so did our parish community grow by receiving another new member into its midst. We love helping others walk along the path of their faith journeys to enter the Church and thus growing our Catholic faith community. Thus, our experience is summed up by the marital vocation of Priscilla and Aquila as described by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI:

One thing is for sure; together with the gratitude of the early Church, of which Saint Paul speaks, we must also add our own, since thanks to the faith and apostolic commitment of the lay faithful, of families, of spouses like Priscilla and Aquila, Christianity has reached our generation...It could not grow only due to the Apostles, who announced it. In order to take root in people’s land and develop actively, the commitment of these families, these spouses, these Christian communities, of these lay faithful was necessary in order to offer the ‘humus’ for the growth of the faith. As always, it is only in this way that Church grows...²

² Benedict XVI, “General Audience for Wednesday, 7 February 2007.”