

Foundations

A Newsletter for Married Couples

Fall

Love in the Age of the Virus

The past six months have truly been a test of our mettle. Sheltering in place, lockdowns, safe distances, wearing masks, virtual school, working from home – these are all realities that have taken over the forefront of our lives. They have been confusing, and for many people, exhausting. They have impacted not only the outer world, but also our inner world. A comforting finding is that most marriages are doing pretty well in the face of all these changes. One would hope that it has caused some of us to rely more on our spiritual resources.

Consider Church

Even though you may not be able to attend church, you may decide that you would like to affiliate with a local parish. Churches have so many ways to engage you. There are scripture readings, and reflections on them. There is music, virtual novenas or lectures, prayer groups. Churches provide social service opportunities – ways to experience a richer life by helping others. But if church does not beckon to you, then there are other paths to explore.

Quest for the spiritual

Have you and your spouse ever talked about your spiritual history? You may want to consider the paths you have each been on and where they intersect. If one has found peace and nourishment through nature, and the other has read books that have inspired them, you may be able to learn from one another about finding the divine in a different way. We



live out, as best we can, what we believe is the **good** life, a life lived in conformity with our values. “Love does no evil to the neighbor;” says St. Paul in his letter to the Romans, “therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” Our efforts to live a good life, to live with love as our north star, will be the hallmark of our spiritual path we are traveling together.

And a Compass to Guide us

Those of us who belong to the Catholic tradition have a wealth of resources to help us on our path to a holy and wholesome life. We have scripture, we have the many spiritual writers who have nourished Christians for centuries, saints who point a way to live in accord with God’s plan through their lives and guidelines from church documents. This

pope has written on love and faith and hope. Popes before him have written on many important topics that help us see ourselves in the light of the faith. They can illumine and inspire our spiritual journey.

Gratefully joined

What is special and unique about spirituality in marriage is that it is not a solitary journey. You will be building a spirituality between you – the love you share, the intimacy through which you express your love, the gratefulness you both feel to have found each other all become a vital part of the spirituality you share as a couple. And that love reflects outward to the world. Celebrate that love! You are a beacon for others in the love you have for each other.

Saints 2020

St Augustine, FL; “When the Saints Go Marching In”; The New Orleans Saints; “He’s no saint!” The word saint is part of the language that carried great significance at one time for people who saw the hand of God in everyday occurrences and who held “good” people in high regard.

Patron Saints

Saints are people in heaven who get the ear of God for you and help direct special graces your way. There are officially designated patron saints for different things. For example, Thomas More is the patron saint of lawyers, St. Jude is the patron of hopeless cases, St. Lucy is the patron saint of vision. Then there are the unofficial patron saints. St. Anthony helps find lost objects, St. Joseph will help you sell your house, and St. Christopher is the original GPS.

New Saints

Since Francis became pope, he has speeded up the process by which saints are declared. He has named several new saints, including Pope John XXIII, and Pope John Paul II. It seems amazing to have saints that have been alive in



current times, people we read about in the newspaper and maybe even had a chance to meet. It has changed the understanding of who saints are by making them much more immediate and accessible.

Anonymous Saints

But in addition to all the saints named by the church who are both official and unofficial patrons, there are also all the unnamed saints. Remember, anyone who

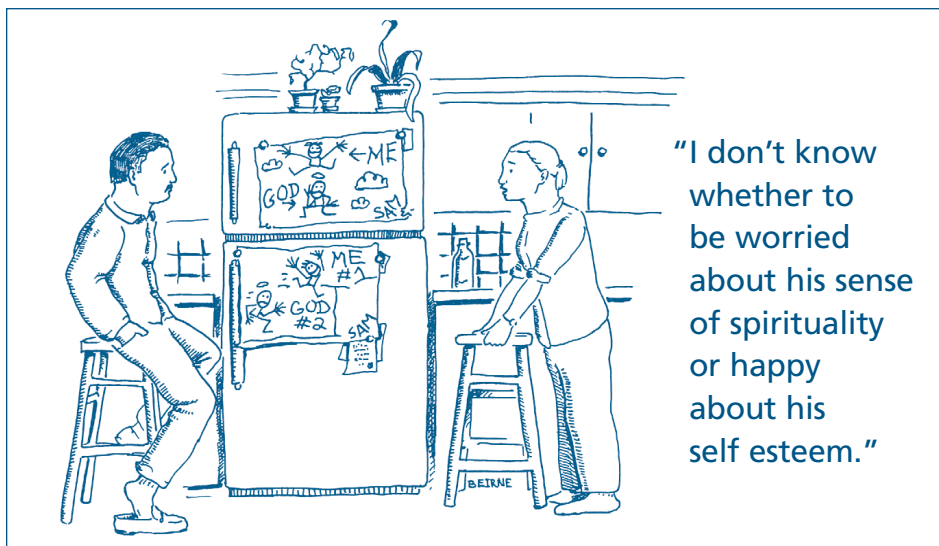
is in heaven is a saint, so all the people you know who have died whom you regard as good enough to be in heaven are saints too. Maybe the pastor of your church when you were a child has died. You were really close to him. You can adopt him as a patron saint.

Saint Grandpa

Your Grandpa, who was such a loving husband – what better patron saint for your marriage? The people in your life who made such a difference when they were alive can continue to be a part of your daily events. Doesn't it seem likely that those who know and love you will make a bigger effort to bend the Lord's ear for you than the saints everyone is praying to?

Fun Saint Stories

If you want to learn some fun thing about saints, you might start with [St. Christina the Astonishing](#). Because she lived so long ago, there is no telling what is true and what is false in the story. Another one you might enjoy is [St. Brigid](#), one of the patron saints of Ireland.



The Strength of Shared Prayer



We drink from the wells of our traditions, and from the wells of our own individual experiences.

German or French, and our spirituality is changed by those roots to a form that informs us and comforts us.

Spiritual Exercise

So choose some style of prayer that appeals to you, and a time of day that works for you both. It's like physical exercise – we all know it's good for us, but we also know we won't keep it up unless it's a kind of exercise that appeals to us. One person loves aerobic dance while another swims laps. There is no one right way except the way that will keep you on track. So play around with different types of prayer until the two of you find what works for you.

In the book, *10 Great Dates Connecting Faith, Love and Marriage*, Heather Larson talks about wanting to have a shared prayer life with her husband. Peter, a researcher, felt prayer should be a private thing, until he saw a study that said couples who pray together reported a better sex life! He decided it was worth a try, and now they pray together comfortably.

Feeling Awkward

Recently a couple giving a presentation to engaged couples confessed to feeling “corny” when they first started to pray together. They suggested some ways to ease that awkwardness. The first suggestion was to say grace together. Just a simple blessing over a meal, like “Thank you, Lord for this food and bless all those who grew the food and got it to our table.”

The Examen

Another simple form of prayer is called [the Examen](#). It involves reviewing your day in a spirit of thankfulness for what went well and asking forgiveness for what

didn't. You try to recall your feelings about the things that happened and see God's presence in your day.

Our Heritage

Your cultural background may determine the style of prayer you choose. The way we and our relatives look at spirituality is shaped by the way we have learned about God throughout our lives. The Latin American theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez, says, “This is what Bernard of Clairvaux put so beautifully when he said that when it comes to spirituality all people must know how to ‘drink from their own well.’”

We drink from the wells of our traditions, and from the wells of our own individual experiences. We bring all of who we are to our spirituality. We are Spanish or Irish or



Connecting spiritually

There are many ways that you can connect spiritually, and one secret is to make it part of your routine.

What can you do daily to connect?

- Say grace
- Light a candle and say a prayer for sick friends,
- Read from a book of inspirational essays
- Read the [scriptures of the day](#) together

What can you do weekly?

- Go to church (if you can physically or go virtually)
- Make a list of those needing your prayers
- Take a walk in nature
- Choose a saint of the week and read their story

What can you do occasionally?

- Take a trip to a place of spiritual significance to you: a shrine, a park, a museum.
- Read a book together.
- Spend time with someone you consider a spiritual mentor.
- Make a novena, or learn a new spiritual practice.
- Just agree to do something to boost your spiritual life and connectedness.



Why do this?

Too many people say they are spiritual and never do anything to nourish that side of themselves. Be the couple that makes it their goal to grow together spiritually!

KNOW SOMEONE
PREPARING FOR A WEDDING?

*personalized
online zoom
sessions available*

Steve and Kathy Beirne, experienced Catholic marriage prep leaders, offer six one-hour sessions. Premarital inventory included.

For more information or to register go to snkpublishers.us/marriagepreparation

Sacred moments

Did you ever consider that your home is a mini-church? It is! The official name is the “domestic church.” It points to the reality that sacred moments are played out daily in our families: birth, death, forgiveness, hope, sacrifice, healing, faith...

Consider some of the activities below. Being conscious of them as graced activities can enrich your common life.

- Spending time together
- Listening
- Saying we're sorry
- Being patient
- Honoring promises
- Taking turns
- Being honest
- Celebrating
- Telling stories about ourselves

The list could be as long as the many things you do each day. Thank God for each other and for God's presence in your home.

Exercise

In the book *One Hundred Cranes: Praying with the Chorus of Creation*, author William Fitzgerald uses images from nature to help the reader recognize the parallels between our spiritual journey and the way nature can lead us to new insights. The first chapter talks about the whooping crane that faced imminent extinction and was brought back by the protection of a wildlife preserve. Another chapter talks about learning from the Saguaro cactus, reaching deep inside yourself to find strength and purpose as the cactus hides its moisture deep within its prickly walls.

Are there creatures in your life that help you learn about yourself? I think of our dog's faithfulness and patience. I learn from the songs of the cardinal which are constant no matter what the weather, no matter how much food is at hand, and from the shrub we planted this summer which would wilt in the sun but come back to full beauty and strength when we watered it. What creatures in your world teach you?

I learn from the

It teaches me

I learn from the

It teaches me

Sometimes people have heard of creatures they would like to experience because they believe there's something to be learned from them.

I would like to see a (dolphin? giant redwood? wolf?)

because I think it would teach me

What creatures
in your world
teach you?



Spirituality: God's Love Languages

Have you read Gary Chapman's book, *The 5 Love Languages*? It's a great view into the way people hear that they are loved. Well, he has another book on spirituality, called *God Speaks Your Love Languages: how to feel and reflect God's Love!* The idea is that the many forms of spirituality that we have created over the centuries reflect the ways God tries to reach us through messages we can hear and understand.

Makes Sense!

If we experience love from other people based on our preferred path, why wouldn't it make sense that we would hear God's call to us the same way? Dr. Chapman explains, "A number of years ago, when I wrote the book: *The 5 Love Languages*, I realized rather quickly that all of these love languages flow from God's love. He speaks all five languages fluently. The Bible is filled with 'Words of Affirmation' where God verbalizes His love to us. Christmas reminds us that He gave us the greatest gift of all when He sent His son. Yes, God is a 'Gift Giver'. What about 'Acts of Service'? That is what the cross is all about."

Learning More

The book also contains reflection questions and a study guide that is meant for groups that want to read the book together. And it contains stories from the lives of people who have discovered a new depth of their relationship with God through using this method of connecting spiritually.

On Your Own

If you're not a reader, there is an audio version. But just by reflecting on your own love language you can figure out the way God will communicate with you most clearly. And you may also discover how you will best express and develop your own spirituality. Are you someone who finds acts of service the language that you hear best? Maybe your spirituality will involve serving lunch at the homeless shelter. If you are someone who

By reflecting on your own love language you can figure out the way God will communicate with you most clearly.

prefers the language of quality time, you may find yourself drawn to a holy hour, or watching a show about a saint.

A Great Resource to share

If you are looking for way to grow together spiritually, you might think about reading this (or listening to it) together. Pairing up each of your preferred love languages with the way you experience God's for you most clearly might help you build a joint spirituality that meets both of your needs. As this period of more time together and time at home unfolds, *God Speaks Your Love Languages* is a resource to consider keeping on hand.



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