



ALWAYS AND EVERYWHERE

It is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks.

Are you emotionally present to your spouse?

No pet lover would feed their pet a steady diet of table scraps. It would weaken health, shorten life, and possibly kill the loved animal by choking. How many of us, though, nurture our closest relationships with leftovers with equally bad results?



BY BISHOP PAUL V. MARSHALL

In particular, I have become aware that many marriages run on scraps. They end badly; or perhaps worse, they just grind on. This is the scenario: Each partner gets out of bed with a list of things to do already churning in their brain. They work hard and do a creditable job all day at home or the job. Then they do useful things at home or in the community in the evening hours. Finally they plop back

into bed too tired even for meaningful conversation, perhaps being briefly present to the spouse in some half-hearted way. And they wonder where the pizzaz went.

Television psychologist Dr. Phil says that loss of libido among married people has reached epidemic proportion. I do not know if that is true, but my encounters with people suggest that his observation covers only a symptom. The larger problem, loss of relationship, has reached pandemic proportion.

People do not seem to be budgeting their emotional energy nearly so wisely as they are investing their retirement funds. Two people running at a high level of energy all day find that their greatest need at the end of the day is rest — they have squandered the resources required to love, honor, and cherish. They have been too busy with good things to have time or energy for the best things.

There may be reasons for that. Even the richest people stay busy to avoid feeling their emotional poverty. If prodded, they may defensively say that their spouse's need for relationship is unreasonable considering all they have to do. Here we see that unfaithfulness to vows takes many forms. Not being emotionally present is one of them.

It is right to ask if we love our career and our success more than we love our spouse and children. It is right to review our marriage vows and ask if we still "forsake all others" on the practical and emotional level.

Easter tide, these seven weeks between the Easter Vigil and Pentecost, are the time when Christians explore what real life looks like. It is the time when we try to inhabit the land that Jesus opened to us in his death and resurrection. For these fifty days, ten days more than Lent, we remember that it was Jesus' love that led him to the cross, and that his love is what the resurrection vindicates.

Nourish your spirit. You cannot give what you do not have.

Do slightly less: trim enough from the daily list so there is something to give at home.

Enjoy each other. After the kids are in bed, do something together for half an hour, with the TV off.

Inhabiting this new land, as far as our marriages go, has many aspects. I would like to highlight three of them.

First, nourish your spirit. You cannot give what you do not have. Self-care is a duty if you are going to be lover. Many people find it helpful to have

some period each day, perhaps only ten minutes, when they do nothing. They sit still, eyes unfocused or closed, and do not think. Going to a quiet place inside takes learning for some, for others it is as easy as listening to their own breathing. It is a fundamental act of self-care that recharges and repairs the soul. Do not do this while driving. For others, listening to music is a cleansing and restoring moment. The point is that, just as surely as one takes vitamins each day, it is useful to take time to nourish the spirit. Exercising the body also helps the mind and spirit.

The second aspect of loving is trickier. Do slightly less: trim enough from the daily list so there is something to give at home. Obviously, most tasks and opportunities will still be there tomorrow — what is surprising is they won't seem so urgent. To be faithful to one's vows requires a deliberate conservation of energy.

Finally, enjoy each other. After the kids are in bed, do something together for half an hour, with the TV off. Some couples read a book together, others discuss the newspaper, some play a game or have a joint hobby. Others just enjoy talking. The truest of lovers share their interior journeys. In anticipation of the coming HBO series, read the published letters between John and Abigail Adams. I have always found this Adams family one where the passion for each other included a passion for discussing ideas.

Change is cumulative. A nation populated with people invested in care of self, conservation of energy, and intentional presence with their beloved, might give Dr. Phil less to worry about.

St. Matthew Society Reception: Sunday, May 4

Bishop Paul will greet members of the St. Matthew Society as they gather on St. Matthew Sunday, May 4, for a special reception to honor and celebrate their generosity to the Church. The St. Matthew Society was founded in 2001 throughout the Diocese of Bethlehem to recognize and thank all those who have planned a gift to their individual parishes. This year's celebration event will be held at the Lehigh Country Club from 3:00 to 5:30 p.m., and will feature food, drink and good company. The Bishop sincerely hopes that all current St. Matthew Society members will plan to join him and each other at this special gathering. For information about enrolling in the St.

Matthew Society, and/or to learn more about the stewardship of planned giving, please contact Char Horst, Missioner for Development, by email or at 610.683.8625.



From last year's reception. PHOTO BY SCOTT HORST



Confirmation at St. Clement's and St. Peter's in Wilkes-Barre

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