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## WITNESSES OF GOD'S LOVE (8)

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May the testimonies in my Pentecost 2004 pastoral letter help us rediscover the beauty and grandeur of Christian marriage!

### TESTIMONY: BOUND TO LOVE

The golden rule of every action is based on the word "love." One's success in life is based on love. It is the foundation, the heart, the home port, the starting point of everything. We are neither priests nor bishops. We say that the sacraments are there for man and woman. Many people have no knowledge of the sacraments. There are couple relationships that are strong because they are founded on love, respect, listening, and forgiveness. Without knowing anything more, they know that there is a God in whom they believe. This is what makes a true society. It is not a matter of appearance, masquerading, parading, or copying, but it is authentic and real. These couples are bound together in love, a love that comes from within. Nineteen years ago we walked up the church's central aisle to make our vows and pledge to love one another forever. Marrying in church was very important to us because it was the "tradition," but I also needed it. I truly loved in my head and heart, and it was to be right in my conduct that I wanted it so. With time, with years of experience, we set aside the books and start observing and thinking, in order to learn that life as a couple is a matter of loving sincerely and truly, and believing in a God whose only desire is our happiness. Blessed are they who experience true love: it makes them grow. Without knowing the Bible and its ramifications too much, we live in love, in a love that brings well-being and blossoming forth in openness to the other, the spouse, and his / her happiness. This means to love and love even more. Happy are those who truly love, they shall see God, no matter who they are, where they are, or how they are. True love is inexplicable and impossible to describe... it can only be lived!

– Daniel and Julienne

### TESTIMONY: A COMMITMENT BEFORE GOD

We decided to get married for three reasons: the example of our parents, giving a name to our children, and the mutual desire to share together the same values of life. Considering that my husband was Canadian and I was American, faith was about the only thing we sometimes had in common. Attending church together was often a way of going out together. God has blessed us with two beautiful, healthy daughters. We have had to face many challenges together, my husband and I, and we still do: a period without work or money, times when one of the spouses was ill, the new responsibility of raising two children, living the simple life without giving in to material temptation, balancing our finances, and being happy oneself as an individual in order to bring something positive to our lives as a couple. After the "honeymoon" of the first years, our love has become more solid and is founded on real and honest values. We appreciate what we have built together, when we see marriages fail. For us, the sacrament of matrimony is a commitment before God, like a contract we have together. We must make an effort to remain faithful to this commitment. The sacrament of matrimony is a plus value we share together, when compared to other forms of marriage. It is like a tool to help us succeed our marriage.

– André and Christine

### TESTIMONY: HE WAS THE CENTRE OF OUR LOVE

We met at the Université de Moncton; Myriam was beginning her first year and Alain already had his bachelor's degree, but he decided to go on for another year. That is how we found ourselves in the same study establishment and fell in Love with one another, Love with a capital L. After only a few weeks Alain knew

that he would wed the charming Myriam, and she, too, felt the same about him! We were convinced that we were made for each other as much as we know our own parents. For us this falling in love was a clear response from God. From her earliest youth Myriam prayed every night, asking God to bring her a husband who could love her deeply and who would be an outstanding father to her children. And here he was! The years of study that followed were more difficult for us, because we were away from each other. Myriam continued her studies, and Alain had just been given a teaching position in his home town. By the way, we are both from the same region, but it was only after we got to the university that we met one another. Surprising, isn't it? I suppose that this was meant to be the time. A priest friend has reassured us that our love would grow since our desire to be together was obviously strong, and that God would protect our love. He was right. We were engaged three years later. About a year before we were married we attended the wedding of one of Alain's friends, and we remembered something very special that the priest had told them, at the time. He has said that for a marriage to succeed it had to be a "ménage à trois," a three-way affair: man, woman, and God. This reassured us because we already had faith in God and we knew that he was already there at the heart of our love. We have now been married nearly ten years. With two good children, by God's grace our love burns as brightly as it did then. We pray as a family nearly every evening, and we know that God guides and protects us, because we are in good health and happy... even in the midst of the difficulties we encounter. Busy as we are as parents, it is quite a challenge to nourish our life as a couple, but being nourished by the Word and the presence of God is also a pleasure to be experienced. Marriage is therefore very important to us since it is a commitment before God, and we firmly believe that he is always there to help us keep our marriage strong and lasting. As we ourselves had our parents for role models, so do we want to pass on to our children this extremely important value which is fidelity to our commitments made before God. Finally, we are convinced that the sacrament of matrimony contributes to the unity and well-being of our beautiful family.

– Myriam and Alain

#### TESTIMONY: WITH GOD'S GREAT DREAM

Our beautiful love story started in 1986. We were engaged for five years. Then, one fine day we decided to get married in a religious ceremony. Why? We could have chosen to live together without benefit of marriage, but as we were both devout believers and wanting children, it was natural for us to be joined in matrimony before God and our families. We wanted to make a statement to the people of our milieu that what we were getting into was not for one night but for an entire lifetime. We knew that with God in our hearts and lives it would be easier for us to love one another, to support one another in difficult times, to educate and cherish our children, these treasures of God, and to progress together along the path of faith in the God of Hope. When God is present, he guides us and helps us live beautiful moments of happiness filled with small daily joys. We were married in church because we were convinced and believed that we could grow more harmoniously together with God's great dream that all humans live in love, happiness, and peace.

– Monique and Rino

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