

Marriage Plans? Words from the wise

by Father Joseph Hattie O.M.I.

Planning on getting married?

If you were a chaplain at Dal. what would you do if a couple walks into your office and says, "We would like to get married next weekend."? (Drop in and tell me some-time)

My own immediate reaction is to ask why? Then to ask what has been done in terms of preparation for this marriage?

My experience has been that the second question generates much more of a reaction than the first.

A reaction that indicates, "But Father Hattie, do you really think that we need to prepare, after all we know what we are doing. Please don't insult us with such a suggestion — really all we want to do is get married."

It always sounds so simple and true. But its simplicity draws a curtain over the true reality of marriage. The reality that two human beings of the opposite sex are asking each other to combine their individual destinies, to blend these histories into one — so that they might begin to create and share a common destiny. Will you become one with me so that we can move into the future as a married couple — so that we can take our place in the ongoing process of civilizing the world.

If I am going to ask another person to join me in this great adventure, to join their destiny with mine, to create a new reality then I think that I not only owe it to myself but especially to my partner — to do all that I can to ensure we can blend our destinies, that we can create a new destiny. If I think enough of the other person I will want to insure our future by investing my time and energy in a conscious effort to prepare for this great privilege.

I say conscious effort because each person who decides to marry has a long history of unconscious preparation. A preparation coming from the environment in which he or she has grown to adulthood. It is from this environment that one's attitudes towards marriage, expectations of marriage, the value of and the values within marriage, the goals we set for marriage are prepared and formed.

It comes from the experiences of our own parents' marriage — from the things we accept in it, from the things we reject in it. We are trained by the attitudes of our friends towards marriage, the marriages of our friends, the jokes we hear and tell about marriage, and comic strips like Andy Capp and Blonde. There are so many ways we are being trained for marriage by our environment.

For something so important your destiny with another person in marriage — you can't be satisfied with only an unconscious preparation.

You have to make it conscious — take it into your own hands — there must be a conscious choosing of the destiny that will be yours as a couple.

This is what I mean when I speak of Marriage Preparation.

And what I mean when I ask a couple — what have you done to prepare for this marriage? What have you done to prepare for the harmonious blending of your two destinies into a new reality?

Conscious marriage preparation is a strong statement of the love you have for each

other. That statement is translated as — I love so much I want to start working now on our relationship so that our future can be built on the rock of unity.

To make such a decision is to choose a lot of hard work. It is also to choose a solid investment for the future of your relationship.

If you are planning to enter marriage this year — or if the opportunity suddenly presents itself — give yourself three months of active, conscious preparation.

Please don't wait until spring.
Father Hattie is the Roman Catholic Chaplain at Dalhousie. His office is in Room 310 of the Student Union Building. He is available Monday to Friday 9-5 pm.

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