

**Celebration of Marriage Witness**  
**By Tony and Cindy Simpson**  
**February 14, 2010**

Good evening. My name is Cindy Simpson and this is my husband, Tony. We are cradle Catholics who attended Catholic grade school and high school. We joined the Community of Epiphany about seven years ago.

Even at age 13 I felt God was calling me to the vocation of marriage. My mom shared a story with me about when she was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade at “Our Mother of Sorrows”, one of the nuns was talking about vocations. She said that if you feel God may be calling you to marry some day then you need to start praying now for your future spouse, so mom did. She prayed that God would bring a Catholic man into her life that would be a loving husband and father. Mom and dad will celebrate their 53<sup>rd</sup> wedding anniversary in June and God more than answered mom’s prayers when He brought dad into her life. It was that story that moved me to start praying for my future spouse. The amazing thing is that the man God brought into my life is so much more than the man I prayed for.

While attending Catholic Engaged Encounter, Tony and I decided it was important that we pray together nightly. This has been an important practice for us for the past 26 ½ years. In the first reading Jeremiah says “blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose hope is the LORD. He is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream: it fears not the heat when it comes; its leaves stay green; in the year of drought it shows no distress but still bears fruit.”

I clearly remember, before we’d navigated any turbulent waters in our lives, praying for God to give Tony and me the strength we would need to face the challenges of life that would be inevitable, and HE has. Like all couples and families we have lived through drought, for us in the form of our daughters’ premature birth and other pregnancy challenges, parenting challenges, physical and emotional health challenges, our son being hit by a drunk driver while walking to his car, communication challenges, employment challenges and spiritual challenges. Through prayer Tony and I have stretched our roots to Gods stream of love, wisdom and comfort. He nourishes us and gives us peace.

God is working through Tony and me, as imperfect as we are, to bring His will for us and our family to fruition. In her CD entitled *Dating and Courtship*, Kimberly Hahn said “the focus in dating tends to be on what do I get out of this? Whereas the basis of marriage is, what do I give?” I believe in living out the vocation of marriage we are called to give *all* of ourselves to our spouse. The love that Tony shows me, our children and extended family mirrors Christ’s love for us and inspires me to want to be that same reflection to him. God continues to reveal Christ like qualities in Tony that I had no way of knowing existed when we married 26 ½ years ago. I pray that Ashleigh and Jordan will be drawn to spouses that mirror Christ to them if God calls them to the vocation of marriage some day. For Tony and me, I pray that God will allow us many more years together and that our lives will bear much fruit!

Cindy said she prayed since she was 13 for a man who would love her, be a great husband and loving father. Well, I'm living proof that God does have a sense of humor. Seriously, in baptism, we are called to follow Jesus. One part of following Jesus is to discern at some point in life what vocation God is calling us to. Fr. Jeff was called to the priesthood. God called Cindy and I to marriage.

With any vocation, we feel you have to work at it to do it well. Now there are two types of work that I think pertain to marriage. One is working to overlook things that irritate us. In any close relationship, there will be times when both people do things that are annoying to the other. Our vows demand that we keep in mind the overarching good in our spouse. That makes the sting not so bad

The other type of work is not so obvious or common. That type is intentional enrichment. With all the demands on adults these days, it's so easy to drift apart. Intentionally setting some time aside to communicate is important to us. So we've attended a marriage retreat at French Lick, and numerous Couples' Valentine day seminars here at Epiphany.

We've also participated in a couple of Christian marriage study courses. One was *Fire Proofing Your Marriage* based on the popular movie *Fire Proof*. Another was Chip Ingram's *To Have And To Hold*. Both these courses gave us the opportunity to share deep thoughts and feelings.

We've read a couple of books together as well. James Dobson's *Night Light Devotional For Couples* and my personal favorite *101 Nights of Great Romance*. Not all of our enrichment could be considered work. The last few years we've been taking a weekend in the late winter to go to a bed and breakfast and relax with each other. And the nights out – even when it's just to a store – we always treat them like dates.

Last, and definitely not least, is we have always prayed together at night before going to bed. And we pray from the heart. When you hear your spouse pray from the heart, you find out deep things. You find out their fears and their hopes. Prayer has helped us to really get to know one another.

What has all this done for us? It has built an emotional intimacy and trust that is absolutely wonderful. Our son Jordan, almost 20 now, said recently that one thing about us that freaks him out is that we don't yell and scream at each other when we argue like his friends' parents do. We told him it's because we don't have built up hurt inside us. That trust we built tells us

that the other person will never intentionally hurt us. When a disagreement occurs, we have a much more open mind because of that trust.

My hope for Jordan is that one day, it won't freak him out. Hopefully he'll seek out a relationship that will build that same trust and emotional intimacy that Cindy and I share. That is my hope for him and his sister Ashleigh. That is my prayer for them. And that is my prayer for all of you who are married.