

Catholic Review Column: Commuter Marriage

A few years ago, when I was Bishop of the Diocese of Bridgeport, a valued employee of the Diocese came to see me. He told me that he would be leaving his position with the Diocese because his wife had been offered a wonderful job in the Midwest.

He put it this way to me, "This is the job she's always wanted but one thing neither of us wants to have is a commuter marriage. What makes our marriage so beautiful is the time we spend together."

I admired his priorities – his marriage and family came first. In our conversation, we talked about couples in successful commuter marriages and how challenging it is for them to find enough time to spend together. He observed that some commuter marriages fall apart because the spouses become preoccupied with their work and end up leading separate lives with separate interests.

This Sunday we celebrate Corpus Christi, the Solemnity of the Lord's Body and Blood. "What do 'commuter marriages' have to do with this special feast?" Perhaps a bit more than you think!

For you see, the Lord didn't come merely to encourage and instruct us; He didn't come into the world merely to get to know us. No, He came to espouse Himself, to marry us, if you will.

When the priest transforms the wine into the precious blood of Christ at Mass, he says: "This is the blood of the new and everlasting covenant!" What kind of covenant? A marriage covenant! Jesus wishes to enter into a most intimate union with our souls. He wishes to be present in the depth of our being and asks us to return His love, just as husbands and wives should be present to one another and reciprocate one another's love.

For a good spiritual life is a lot like a good marriage; it takes time and presence. Our faith teaches that Jesus is truly present to us in the Blessed Sacrament –and that he is present to us in personal and powerful way. But how present are we to the Lord?

How much time do we spend with him?

If the truth be told, our relationship with the Lord can be something like a commuter marriage. We are busy people – with families to raise, jobs and careers to tend to, problems that absorb us, a social life and hobbies, all the things that are part of daily life ... most of us are on the run, moving around most of the time. It's easy for all the things that preoccupy us to crowd out the Lord so that we no longer spend any quality time with him-like couples who live apart, work apart, and eventually, fall out of love.

It's probably true to say that most of us were in fact called to fall in love and stay in love with the Lord-in a sort of "spiritual" commuter marriage. And Corpus Christi is an opportunity for us to ask ourselves about our relationship with the Risen, Eucharistic Lord. Amid all the sound and fury in our lives, have we really fallen in love with the Lord truly present in the Eucharist?

When we are in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, what's in our hearts? Are we thinking about our next appointment or a project we need to finish? Are we talking shop to ourselves instead of talking to the Lord? Are we daydreaming?

When commuting husbands and wives get together, they need to turn their attention to one another. They need to look at each other in love and to speak to each other from the heart, not continue their busy existence. So too, when we kneel before the Blessed Sacrament, we must allow His heart to speak to our heart, to inform our minds with His truth and to inflame them with His love, to shape us into images of His own goodness and glory.

Even though our lives are busy, like spouses in a successful commuter marriage, we have to make sure that our relationship with the Lord is primary, not peripheral, and that we are spending enough time and quality time with the One whose love never fails, whose love is everlasting!