

# The people God wants us to meet

I write from Long Island, N.Y., where I am visiting with cherished friends, Joe and Ida Ferraro, to attend their son Joseph's wedding. If ever there was a story of a deep, enduring, meant-to-be friendship – ours is it.

God placed the Ferraros into my life precisely on the evening of April 4, 1982, in Jamaica (in the Caribbean, not Long Island). It was His plan – simply our time to meet. No coincidence, only an intended camaraderie from minute one. Explaining what Joe and Ida mean to me is hard – they mean *that* much.

Thirty-six years later, I feel stronger than ever towards the Ferraros and their four grown kids. Simply, they are my favorite family. My husband and our children are close with them, too. We've watched each other's kids grow up. We've supported each other through family milestones, trekking the 255.7 miles between Sparks and Smithtown, N.Y., to attend birthday parties, graduation celebrations, parents' funerals and weddings. We've vacationed together and stayed at each other's homes. When it's time to leave, we never want to say goodbye.

We are *famiglia*.

I believe there is a definitive plan of which people enter our lives – and when and why. (Where isn't as important. God just happened to pick a picturesque tropical vacation in Ocho Rios for the Ferraros and me; we were all on honeymoons.)

Specific people are sent to us to join our lives; and we to them. Some of the relationships transform into lifelong friendships; some are only temporary. (We all have fizzled relationships. *To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. Ecclesiastes 3:1.*)

One consistent prayer between me and God is for him to send good people to my four kids: people who will be a good influence, people who will love them well, inspire them, and help them to act in the best possible character.

At times, we question *why* God places us with certain people: how did he pick that cabbage-head boyfriend, or that annoying neighbor who constantly causes drama

along the street? (Every neighborhood seems to have one.) And let's not mention the assortment of zany husband and wife pairings out there – *ohhh boy*.

Yes, some people we would have preferred God *hadn't* sent our way. Yet there is always a definite lesson learned from each human we encounter. I thoroughly believe that. We walk away with *something* from the relationship. Two short years after that Jamaica honeymoon, I got the Ferraros – and an annulment.

On the contrary, God plays matchmaker between super teachers and struggling students in need of them. Perhaps in college we were randomly paired with a roommate and became great friends. Some bosses have become fine mentors who teach us well in our careers. We've befriended some very decent (no-drama) neighbors who become close, like family. As well, multitudes of loving marriages last for decades – God knows what he's doing playing Cupid.

I wish for each of you to be blessed with special people like my Ferraros. Or at least one favorite neighbor or friend ***so treasured***, it's tough to describe exactly the depth of what s/he means to you.

These people are immense gifts – beautiful blessings. It's not a fluke. It's no accident. It is not good luck or bad luck. The people in our lives – and those who have been in our past – are merely the people God wants us to meet.