Wit & Wisdom: ‘Love writes with its own poetry’

By Father Joseph Breighner

I walked past some magazines on a table in the waiting room of the offices I rent one day a week for counseling. The cover on People magazine had the headline: “The World’s Sexist Man” or something like that. I didn’t pick up the magazine, but I felt sad. It wasn’t my picture on the cover!

I also found some comfort. It wasn’t your picture either. Misery does love company. (Only kidding).

We may live in one of the silliest societies in the world. We glamorize the unimportant – looks, sex, entertainers – and trivialize the important – fidelity, commitment, loyalty, faith, hope and love. We have learned to worship sex and to devalue love.

Like Christmas, we can trivialize Valentine’s Day. (Or ‘Valentime’s Day’ as I sometimes hear). We can turn it into one more commercial experience. God help the men who forget to buy their wife or girlfriend a gift or card. Stores can make money, but our spirits are not uplifted.

So I would like to share a poem I wrote many years ago. Someone referred to it recently in a class that was teaching Pope John Paul II’s Theology of the Body. They thought it reflected the late Holy Father’s teaching. Since I wrote it nearly 40 years ago, I’m pleased to have anticipated that teaching. I’ve simply entitled it: “A Valentine.” I hope my sentiments are worthy of St. Valentine:

Valentine is for lovers,

Ah, life’s exquisite clichés.

Visioned bodies under covers

Locked in lovers special ways.

Yet, love is more than fantasy,

Fabled pleasures all the time.

Love writes with its own poetry,

And sings with its own rhymes.

Yes, Valentine is for lovers,

But lovers are for life,

And true love fully hovers

Over husband and his wife.

So would you be my Valentine?

Would you walk with me through life?

Would you follow life's familiar line

That leads through joy and strife?

Will you gamble that the fates

Cannot part us on our way?

Will you share the loves and hates

That challenge us every day?

For life's too short to pass it by,

And too long to walk alone.

And beauty gleams in earth and sky

On those whom love has shone.

I cannot promise that each day

Will sparkle like the dew.

I cannot promise an easy way,

Only promise to be with you.

I'll be with you in the strengths and joys

And the uncertainty of our younger fears.

And I'll share the pressures and the noise

And the magic of our middle years.

And in the dusk of fading light,

As twilight slowly nears,

I'll love you with all love's might

Counting joys and not the tears.

So if you'll put your hand in mine,

If you'll walk with me til death,

Your life will be my Valentine

Treasured 'til life's last breath."

During my 35 years on the radio on WPOC, I used to surround that poem with lots of romantic music. Sorry I can't provide the music here.

One final thought. One of the greatest challenges to loving someone for life is the whole issue of forgiveness. We humans are human. There are arguments and misunderstanding and even infidelities in marriage. Not forgiving only steals joy from both people. Jesus could forgive his executioners from the cross. We need the same kind of Christ-like love.

Allow me to close with a quote from a little hand-made decoration. It was a shell on a piece of driftwood and on the shell was written: "My brokenness, brought with humility and simplicity, gets washed away in the ocean of your love." Our sins are only tiny waves on the ocean of God's forgiveness. Let's make our love and forgiveness like God's.