

FROM HALLMA

10 years into marriage, a CCL wife retraces her wedding cards

I unearthed the box full of wedding cards from a pile of shoeboxes on a shelf in the basement. It's only been 10 years, but they have already begun to give off the spicy, acrid smell of old paper. Glitter from one card has migrated to all the rest, like Tinker Bell dusting the history of our family with words like "magic" and "dreams."

Yet magic and dreams are only part of the story, and "happily ever after" is a cop-out of an ending. A wedding is a glorious moment, but marriage is not about a moment or an hour or even a day. It is made of many moments – good, bad and indifferent – and together, they form something greater than the sum of the parts.

*"Life, like laughter and love,
is best when shared."*

Once, my best friends were the girls I knew, and sharing experiences with them enriched my life. But nothing prepared me for the consuming closeness of marriage. A friend might advise, but a spouse gets an equal say. It sounds confining but actually it's quite the opposite. Left to myself, I might never make sense of the muddle that is a tough decision. But when we put our heads together, what seemed to be a murky mess suddenly becomes clear.

Many of my husband Christian's life experiences are so deeply ingrained in my psyche that I claim them as my own – and vice versa. We almost remember things we've never experienced. Sharing binds a family together. It makes us part of something bigger than ourselves. Moments hoarded will fade. Moments shared take on a life of their own.

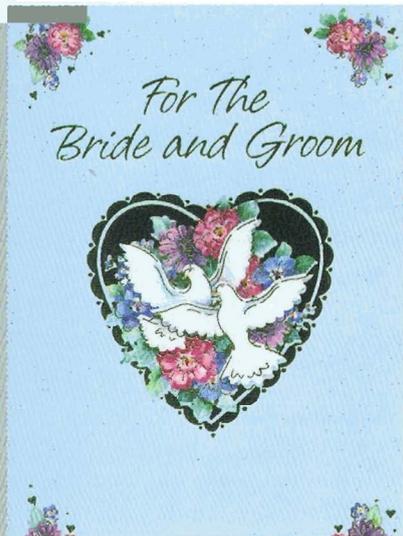
*"A wedding day wish
made just for two..."*

Except marriage isn't about two. Not really. The best marriages reach beyond hearth and home. A couple may be called to lead Scripture studies, to work with Saint Vincent de Paul, to minister as choir members or lectors or Eucharistic ministers.

By Kathleen M. Basi

WORK TO REALITY

Christian and I find ourselves closest together when we are focused outside ourselves. When our daughter lands in the hospital, we speak and act as a unit. When someone we love is threatened, we don't have to stop and confer to



decide who intervenes and who stays with the kids. It happens automatically, as if we are both following orders from a central processor. And I think that's the point. Unity is a gift that allows us to reach out and make a difference in the world.

Hiding at the bottom of the box, I find the card that sums up all the others:



Two become One.

*It's that simple...
It's that beautiful.*

*May your love
help you both to see
your dreams and plans come true,
And fill your hearts
with happiness
in the years ahead of you.*

The friend who sent this wish lost her husband shortly after. It was certainly not her plan to be widowed a few years into married life. Our plans, too, were disrupted – first by infertility, then by the arrival of a child with special needs. Yet life goes on; joy is reborn; love remains.

This simple message compresses the whole sacrament we live into a poignant truth – and a lofty goal. Marriage is a union not only of spirit, but of body. When two become one, something new springs into being: a unity of spirit, and a unity enfleshed in our children.

And that unity, once created, does not cease to exist, though we often fail to reflect it in daily living. Even B.C. (before children), it was all too easy to get wrapped up in TV or our own individual pursuits. These days we struggle daily to find the right balance between nurturing the souls entrusted to us and nurturing the bond from which they sprang. I used to think we would eventually learn the trick. Now I think this challenge is what marriage is all about.

There is no glamour in the sum total of these moments. But the sprinkling of glitter on the cardboard bottom reminds me that, after all, love – true love – has the power to transform everyday life into something magical. ■