

Leaning on God: The Power of Praying Together

by Lisa Everett

An arch is one of the most beautiful and functional architectural features ever invented, described once by Leonardo da Vinci as “two weaknesses, which, when leaning upon each other, become a strength.” But if you think about how an arch is actually constructed, each half leans, not directly upon the other, but upon the capstone, which literally holds the whole structure in place. This is a very good analogy for the vocation of marriage, in which an individual man and woman, each with their own weaknesses, are joined together through God himself to become a beautiful and sturdy structure which serves as the foundation of the family. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us: “Without his help, man and woman cannot achieve the union of their lives for which God created them ‘in the beginning.’” As a married couple, we can deepen our awareness of God’s dwelling among us and lean on Him more consciously by learning to pray together as husband and wife.

Pope John Paul II wrote that communion in prayer is both a consequence of and a requirement for the communion bestowed by the sacrament of matrimony. Like the two disciples along the road to Emmaus, a Christian husband and wife who invite Christ to stay and walk with them, day by day, will experience his presence in marvelous ways. They will discover that as they draw closer to Christ, he will deepen their love for one another. Perhaps this is why studies have shown that couples who make shared prayer a regular part of their life together have stronger marriages than those who simply attend church services together.

Now, if you are like many husbands and wives, the thought of praying together, just the two of you, makes you somewhat uncomfortable. Perhaps you have even given it a try and it seemed awkward or strained. Here are some suggestions drawn from the experience of married couples that you might find helpful. Begin with a few moments of silence together to become attentive to the presence of God. Simply holding hands and slowly praying aloud the “Our Father” is a good way to get started. Doing this reminds us that besides being spouses, we are, above all, brother and sister in Christ, children of the same Father, in whose house we hope to spend eternity together. Is there any goal more important in our marriage?

One wonderful resource that can help couples to pray together on a regular basis is *Magnificat*, a small monthly missalette-sized magazine. For each day of the month, it contains morning and evening prayer, the readings for the Mass of the day, a reflection from a saint or spiritual writer, and much more. Try praying morning or evening prayer together as a couple, or perhaps read aloud the Gospel of the day and spend a few minutes meditating on it, asking the Lord to show you what it means for your life and sharing with each other any insights you receive. You can order a subscription by calling 1-866-273-5215 or through their website at www.magnificat.com. Some religious bookstores

in the diocese sell current issues of Magnificat, and some pastors order bulk subscriptions and make them available to parishioners.

Another practice to consider is praying the Divine Mercy chaplet or a decade of the Rosary aloud for a particular intention. Don't feel that you have to confine yourselves to the traditional mysteries, but try picking an event or an encounter in the life of Christ that seems most relevant to what is on your minds and hearts. Parents praying together are powerful intercessors for their children, and we should confide to Christ all of our dreams and difficulties in trying to raise them as his sons and daughters: "Pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord; Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your little ones" (Lamentations 2:19).

Sometimes we will hear the Lord speaking in our hearts in a subtle inspiration or sudden insight. Sometimes something our spouse will say will strike us as a message from the Lord. Sometimes we will share with Christ a problem we are having or a decision we need to make and ask him to give us guidance through the Scriptures. And when we open the Bible and begin to read, we will be amazed by how much a particular passage speaks to our situation.

Whichever form of prayer appeals to you as a couple, give it a go and persevere. You won't regret this simple investment in your relationship with Christ and with each other that will reap incredible dividends in this world and the next.