

ENTRE AMIGOS – Opinion column

February 18, 2010

Live your marriage fully, save it from mediocrity and failure

By Mar Muñoz-Visoso

Have you ever asked yourself the question: What can I do for my marriage today? Believe it or not, to ask yourself that question and to take the answer to heart every day may mean the difference between a happy marriage, a marriage lingering in mediocrity, or one doomed to failure. Most of the time, the difference resides in the small, everyday details that nurture or poison the relationship—details that are often born of the understanding both partners have about what marriage is all about and the value they put in their union.

Every marriage goes through some tests. Sooner or later, they all face a crisis. As with every living organism, though, the crisis can be one of growth or lead to death. A problem dialogued in time can make the union stronger and closer, while a series of ignored or unattended crises can over time derail a marriage.

To help Spanish-speaking married couples and those thinking about marriage, the U.S. bishops' conference just launched www.PorTuMatrimonio.org, an all-Spanish Website where Hispanic couples can find advice, stories, testimonials and resources to accompany them in their daily lives.

The site is the Hispanic version of the popular USCCB site www.ForYourMarriage.org. It has been created originally by a group of Latino marriage and family life experts from around the country who provide it with a distinctly Latino flavor.

The result is a rich array of helps: testimonials, vignettes describing common daily life situations, the tip of the day, the Scripture of the week; in-depth articles for married couples and those preparing for marriage; ideas to nurture and evaluate the relationship; common problems affecting couples; teachings of the Church on Catholic marriage; and reflections on how the couple's relationship affects family life. There are all kinds of good stuff for almost everyone.

As I was reading the articles and thoughts and listening to the testimonials, numerous experiences, both personal and of other couples we know, came to mind. Almost instinctively, I started assigning each one to possible recipients: "I have to pass this one to so and so...I wish

Johnny and Jane would read this... These two friends went through the same thing, I've got to recommend to them this site."

It is not every day that a Website elicits such emotions in me—believe me, I visit a few. But this one touches a critical nerve: the vocation in life of so many of us. Few are the times that we stop to reflect and evaluate: Are we nurturing our relationship? Are we growing together in it? Are we doing our part so that it grows stronger every day?

Perhaps you are in a situation where you have been “hanging on” to your marriage or “tolerating” your spouse for many years because you “had to.” It might not be too late or, better yet, it might be time for both of you to discover the hidden treasures of your marriage, to save it from an apparently unavoidable shipwreck or to dust off the very reasons that led you to get married in the first place and make those treasures shine again. Perhaps this site might help.

For those thinking in marriage, asking themselves certain important questions before making such a decision is critical. The list at “Por tu Matrimonio” can help you get started. If you feel your marriage is lacking something, if it subsists in a constant state of crisis, or if you think you already do or have done everything possible for your marriage, I invite you to visit this site.

In the First Letter to the Corinthians (I Cor 7: 3-4) Paul’s old advice still rings true: “The husband should fulfill his duty toward his wife and likewise the wife toward her husband.” In other words, it takes two to tango—with God’s help. It is advisable, then, that both be on the same page when it comes to expectations and responsibilities. Do you take care of your spouse? Do you give your spouse what you owe him/her?

Honey, I think I found the perfect Lenten exercise for both of us. Are you on?

Mar Muñoz-Visoso is assistant director of Media Relations at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops