

# Marriage and the Ultimates

By FATHER ROBERT COLLINS

I would like to try, in a few sentences, to suggest a connection between the marriage of a young couple (I'll call them John and Mary) and the ultimate things in life — between this happy, human and holy event and the beginning and the end and the center of all things.

A poet about a century ago wrote of the journey of certain quanta of heat and energy and light from the sun through all those 93 millions of miles of empty space until — at a certain moment — they reach a little plot of ground, and a flower opens.

Every wedding can be compared to that — the opening of some things fragile and lovely and alive. But from what central fire does the energy of this life, this love come?

It may be arguable that at the center of all things there is a blank. That life really has no meaning but only the bitter charm of absurdity, with only darkness, cold, silence at the inert center.

Not so, we say as Christians. At the start, at the end, dancing at the central heart is Act, intelligence, understanding — love like a blazing bonfire, energy like a torrent of joy — Someone and Someone who is Joy itself, Someone who invented man, Someone who hit on the idea of woman, Someone who thought up John, Someone who dreamed up Mary.

Am I being too pretentious? Am I making two persons too important? Not on your life. Each of them is of more meaning, more dignity, more value than I could ever manage to say. They are only beginning to discover each other — each other's mystery. They are

setting out on a voyage of discovery for which a human life is not nearly long enough. Their love and their loyalty are given on their wedding day not to an idea or an institution but to each other. Each is accepting another person, something deeper than the sea, bigger than the sky.

Today I wish, I pray that their love for each other may never stop growing; and their voyage will be blessed — every landfall lucky — many happy islands — every wave charmed.

Human life is human life. And there will be difficulties, demands for sacrifice. But may John and Mary and all married couples always be side by side, and whatever sorrows come — may each dry the other's tears, and each restore the other to joy.

[Father Collins is director of the diocesan Office of Family Life.]

## Keep God in the Wedding

While there is no music that is more sacred or secular, there are associations connected with some music that make it less preferable for marriage ceremony use, according to the chairman of the diocesan music commission.

Since wedding music has become a matter of controversy in the past few years for many brides and grooms planning their ceremonies, some guidelines have been established by the diocesan music commission so everyone taking part in the wedding will be happy with the music.

Sister Virginia Hogan, SSJ, who chairs the music commission, admits that by its nature, music is neither sacred or secular. But believes that "the choice of

wedding music should be more vertical than horizontal."

She explains, "Human relationship is not the whole essence of worship. Even at a marriage the purpose is not just the love of two people but wanting God in on this love and thanking him for it."

Sister Virginia, who teaches at St. Agnes High School, says that wedding ceremonies can be very beautiful and personal today because of the optional readings music offered to the bride and groom.

But, with the options come the opportunity and responsibility to work for an overall theme for the ceremony, she continued.

Some guidelines offered by the music commission include:

- \* Do the lyrics express a Christian or pagan view of love?
- \* Does a particular selection emphasize and enhance that part of the ceremony where it occurs, or is it a "showcase" piece that has no liturgical justification for its use?
- \* Does the music promote and further the progress of the ceremony, or does it simply cause a delay?



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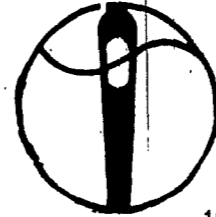
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