

Weddings & Marriage

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE
CATHOLIC STAR HERALD

Beginning to Live in Love has Happy Endings

By Mary Ann Chezik

When Tiffany Reader and Spencer Tynan were driving to their required marriage prep program in Vineland, they were bracing themselves for hours of sitting and listening to people lecture them. They expected maybe a priest to talk about Catholic teaching and values, and they thought they might be talked down to. Friends' experiences of Pre-Cana had reinforced their low expectations. An aunt and uncle had told them, though, to try to take it seriously, to go in with an open mind, and to try to learn something new. So they tried to muster some enthusiasm for what promised to be a long afternoon.

Arriving at St. Isidore's parish hall, they saw other couples who looked as uneasy as they felt. That feeling, however, only lasted until the session started.

"It wasn't like anything we expected at all," says Tiffany of their first Beginning to Live in Love session.

Spencer adds: "Kathy and Ron (Feher) were so open and welcoming. They took away any barriers we had. They opened themselves up to us, and that opened us up. We learned so much: things that go beyond faith into action. They didn't skirt around issues or talk in abstract concepts. They gave concrete examples of those concepts from their own lives and showed us how to apply it. They are very endearing!"

"We loved it," says Tiffany, "and as we got in the car after the first session, we were immediately excited for the next week. The program was all about 'us' and how we can make our relationship better."

Tiffany, a graduate in dance of the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, who danced with the '76'ers Dance Team, met Spencer when she moved to Las Vegas to open her own studio. Spencer, a Wisconsin native, had moved with his family to Las Vegas.



Father Jamie King officiates at the wedding of Amy Morrell and Christian Farley Aug. 10 at Infant Jesus Parish, St. Margaret's Church, Woodbury Heights.

They met while working in the same club. "Sometimes I think I had to move to Las Vegas just to meet Spencer!" says Tiffany.

They are now both New Jersey residents, who have known each other seven years and thought they knew each other well. But during the exercises and activities of the program there were surprises for both as they shared what they thought on important topics.



TIFFANY READER AND SPENCER TYNAN

"We learned so many different things, like the Love Languages and understanding the guy's mindset – it was so enlightening for us," says Tiffany.

"I enjoy science," says Spencer, "so I liked the biological basis of the different brain chemistries of man

and woman. Ron and Kathy shared so many great scientific facts and studies about our masculinity and femininity and about marriage. There are not many opportunities for us to have this type of conversation."

"And we got new insights into the Catholic vision of marriage: a priest is married to the church; she is his bride.

And with us, the fact that our relationship is through God with each other is really eye-opening!" adds Tiffany. "I would recommend Beginning to Live in Love to anybody preparing for marriage. We use the information from the sessions all the time now. It's an important and valuable thing to do for your marriage; you won't survive without it!"

(Tiffany and Spencer were so enthusiastic about the program that they took time to be interviewed just days before their wedding. Their Nuptial Mass was celebrated Sept. 15 at the Cathedral Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul, Philadelphia.)

Another young couple who were at the same Beginning to Live in Love program in June were Amy Morrell and Chris Farley. Their attitude was also less than positive as they came to St. Isidore's that Saturday.

"Knowing that we had to give up four Saturdays in our busy lives, we were kind of overwhelmed," says Chris. "We weren't sure what it was going to be like or what kind of people we were going to run into. After meeting Ron and Kathy and the other couples helping them, we realized it wasn't going to be all that bad."

"After the first session, we ended up going out with friends of ours. Everyone had known that we had Pre-Cana that day and were asking how it went," says Amy. "Chris and I were excited to share that we learned something new about each other. We had never shared the moment we knew we were in love or the moment we knew we were going to marry each other. That was one of the first activities we did in class, and we were both so excited to share our answers with each other. I'll never forget the feeling I had when Chris was explaining when he knew I was the one! It was awesome learning things about our love that we never thought of before!"

When asked if there was anything that Chris learned in the first session, he quickly replied, "Amy is my gift from God!" The sessions were a learning experience for Chris, a non-Catholic, as he learned about the sacrament of marriage. "I was surprised at the statistics that people who pray together stay together. This course was an eye-opener for both of us and strengthened our relationship with each other. We learned so much in those four weeks!"

They both are encouraging their friends to have a positive marriage preparation experience by going to Beginning to Live in Love.

(Amy and Chris were married Aug. 10, at Infant Jesus Parish in Woodbury Heights.)

The Beginning to Live in Love program is comprised of four three-hour sessions that run once a week for four weeks. Each session includes exercises that personalize the content for the engaged and helps them to learn-by-doing under the guidance of the mentor couple team. For more information about this program, go to www.livinginlove.org, or call the PMRC at 610-640-4105. To learn more about the Preparing to Live in Love mentoring program, contact Dick and Marie Schmitt, diocesan Preparing to Live in Love coordinators, at 856-435-1629, or email them at schmitt31895@comcast.net.

Mary Ann Chezik is a Living in Love Program volunteer.

True Love Waits



Photos by Alan M. Dumoff, more photos ccdphotolibrary.smugmug.com

A True Love Waits adult training seminar took place at St. Peter Church in Merchantville on Aug. 25. The seminar for youth leaders, teachers and parents was a preparation for the upcoming three-day True Love Waits retreat, to be held from Friday, Oct. 26-Sunday, Oct. 28, for teens and pre-teens in seventh and eighth grades. True Love Waits is an international campaign challenging teens and pre-teens to remain sexually abstinent until marriage. It communicates the message of sexual purity of youth with skits, videos and discussion. Lifenet, Inc., a non-profit educational organization which makes age-appropriate presentations on topics of abstinence, abortion and stem cell research to schools, youth groups, churches and civic organizations, and Father David Rivera, parochial vicar at St. Peter, spearheaded the evening. Above, Lifenet's Omar Fernandez offers his heart to an attendee while, at right, Holly Lawmaster speaks about saving yourself for the one you marry.



Five reasons for not having a destination wedding

By Father Peter J. Daly
Catholic News Service

The airline magazine had an article entitled "Five Reasons to Choose a Destination Wedding." Of course airlines want you to choose a destination wedding; they get paid for travel.

Destination weddings are all the rage these days. People go away to expensive resorts, often in Mexico or the Caribbean, to get married.

The five reasons the airline gave for encouraging destination weddings seemed bogus to me.

First, they claim that destination weddings "aren't as expensive as you think" because you have fewer guests.

Not so, I think, when you add up everything that the guests will spend.

Second, they said you could choose anywhere in the world.

That is true — anywhere but home.

Third, the airline magazine said that the wedding dress "needs a destination"; you can't take photos of the bride in your crummy old neighborhood or your poor old parish church.

Fourth, a destination wedding "can double as a honeymoon."

True. However, do you really want your parents and in-laws on your honeymoon, or were you not planning on inviting them to the wedding?

Fifth, it said you can leave the planning to the hotel staff.

That's true if you want a pre-packaged, cookie-cutter wedding that has much more to do with maximizing profit for the resort than it does with celebrating the beginning of your married lives together.

Destination weddings are a sign of our disconnected, secular, consumerist culture. Here are my five reasons for not having a destination wedding.

First, it has nothing to do with your faith. Unless you belong to the church of Hilton or Hyatt, destination weddings are not a religious event. Hotels

are not a proper venue for the celebration of a sacrament. There is nothing sacred in the symbolism or the atmosphere of a hotel. For Catholics, it is a denial of the idea that this event is an action of the church.

Marriage is a sacrament that should be celebrated in the context of Scripture and the Eucharist, and in front of the altar of the church where you are known.

Second, they have nothing to do with your family. Unless you grew up at a resort, this is not the place that you know or are known. Destination weddings are, by definition, away from your family and real life.

Weddings celebrated in your parish church, in the old neighborhood, in the bosom of your family, ground you in the place where you ought to be. This celebration is about making a mature commitment, not a thrilling vacation package.

Third, destination weddings will exclude your poorer friends and relatives. It is already a sacrifice to buy a gift and get a new suit or dress for the wedding. Most people, especially those pressed for cash, are not going to be able to board a plane and fly away for a week just to go to a wedding.

Is that how you want to start your married life — by excluding people?

Fourth, what will you tell your children, and where will you celebrate your anniversaries? Isn't it better that your pictures show your relatives in your homeplace, celebrating this great event?

Isn't better that you celebrate your 25th or 50th anniversary in front of the altar where you took your vows?

Fifth, you still get to go away, but the honeymoon should be private. It is a time for you to have your first tender moments together as a married couple. You should not be getting a tan on your honeymoon, if you catch my drift.

Airlines might be selling travel, but they should not be selling ersatz sacramental celebrations.

In ancient Ireland it was a symbol of good luck to give a bell to a loved one. The bell brings good luck and if at any time during a relationship there is discord, the ancient Irish remedy for lovers' quarrels is to ring this special bell and break the spirit of discontent and renew the spirit of love. The Claddagh Symbol on the Bell represents the famous wedding band from Galway which symbolizes: Love, Friendship & Loyalty



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