

## George Avery & Martha Krattli

I have known George Avery literally all his life, since the day he was born. I've known George's mother since Michele started dating his father. I've known George's father since Mark was a kid. I've known George's grandmother Pat since she was a church musician. Through the Averys I've met a wonderful circle of people with strong values, open hearts and a joy for life. Now to my great happiness, Martha comes into that family with an equally impressive circle.

I told George I would not embarrass him up here, but I just want to share one memory from when he and John were very little, even before Ben was born. Mark and Michele visited me at St. Regis, where I was pastor. Before walking into the church they had told their sons how to behave. Then, coming up to see me, John was, uh, John was being John. And George was hanging toward the back, wanting no part of this. Mark explained to me about George, "He's a little shy."

Well, from that day, George has matured as a fine son to his parents, a tremendous older brother to his siblings, and a good friend to me. Martha, you've struck gold: George will be an outstanding husband and father. I also know George would want me to say he's the one who struck gold, finding you. You also come from a great family, full of faith and love, holding responsible jobs that make our community a better place. Martha herself is preparing to offer her life in the medical profession, where she'll make such a good nurse, she almost makes you want to get sick.

Anyone can fall in love, but the best relationships build on strong values. Values drew George and Martha to the passage from the Book of Proverbs that serves as the first reading for their wedding, a reflection written some 2700 years ago. It says that the best wife is more valuable than pearls. She entrusts her heart to her husband, never failing his appreciation. With her hands she provides for her household. With her hands she gives to the poor. George and Martha both liked this passage because it applies to both of them, not just to one. They emailed me this: "We are both valuable beyond any possessions. We are each other's most valuable gift. We hope to always remember this, especially during difficult times. Another powerful message [from the Book of Proverbs] - beauty is fleeting. We know looks change, but we are confident in the foundation of love we have built, and look forward to our love growing even stronger."

It will. The more you receive love, the more you give it. Jesus told his disciples at the Last Supper, "I love you." "This is my commandment: love one another." They could love because they received love first. Saint Paul says love is something you can see. "It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Love is a way of life for us Christians, and we need the faithful example of committed, married couples to show us how it's done.

George and Martha, you both have people who have known you all your life: your parents and their close friends. But the one who knows you best is God. He has known you from before you were born. He created you in love. He sustains you in love. He gives you the joy of love. He asks you for only one thing in return: Don't be shy with love. Love not just one other, but love even those who need to grow in the values you already possess.

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