

Spencer Shearer & Amelia Ernstmann

Spencer, when you look at Amelia, you probably feel as though you've known her all her life. Well, I have known her all her life, but I concede that you know her better. Yet nobody knows her nor you better than God, whom we praise today for finding a most creative way for the two of you to meet—not in med school, but painting houses with Habitat for Humanity. You really connected while at a reunion, flying kites. Habitat is a nonprofit organization that helps families build and improve places to call home. As you are demonstrating through your wedding today, that's something couples can experience God doing: helping families build and improve places to call home.

Couples build best on the foundation of love. Jesus made this abundantly clear when asked to articulate the two greatest commandments. Both commandments had existed in the old law, but he was the first to pluck them out of hundreds of possibilities and link them together: Love God, and love your neighbor. We learn over and over in life if we make decisions based on love of God and neighbor, instead of on personal pleasure, all will go well. Spencer and Amelia both cited this passage as one that forms the foundation of their faith; it will also form the foundation of their marriage.

Near the end of his Letter to the Romans, St. Paul gave Christians some principles to follow as they navigate life through the turbulent waters of the world: "Let love be sincere," he said; "hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection." Paul then added what many of us have witnessed as an impressive property of successful marriages: "anticipate one another in showing honor." Don't withhold your kindness until your partner leads the way. Compete with one another to do the right thing first.

Spencer and Amelia already come into this relationship with a strong foundation of love for neighbor. They have demonstrated this in their studies, their choice of careers, and how they volunteer their time. They care about others, and they don't wait for their neighbor to honor them first; they anticipate with respect. Some people think that we humans are naturally selfish, but we're not; we are naturally selfless. By nature we multiply and feel satisfaction when we give ourselves in love for another.

This is what we believe of God. God did not wait for us to honor him; he loved us first by creating us and sending his Son into the world. When you experience beauty in nature and in another human being, you come to know God's desire to delight us, even before we can try to delight him.

God knew each one of us since before we were born. He formed us in the womb and endowed us with certain gifts, all out of love. As we witness this love between Amelia and Spencer today, let us recommit ourselves to show honor to God and neighbor, fulfilling the law that Jesus says is the foundation of all others, the law of love. When we love, our lives soar higher than kites.

Saturday, June 12, 2021