

## Mariano Marin and Annie Abbott

Mariano and Annie grew up in St. Louis about twenty minutes from each other. They both came from Catholic families. They moved to Kansas City at the same time into the same neighborhood, and they both started attending the same church. They finally met when the cathedral held a social event for young adults at a bar and grill up the street, and they eventually got engaged just a few blocks away near the place of this wedding and the reception. Although Mariano's family comes from Costa Rica, and Annie's comes from St. Louis, although Kansas City is a pretty big place, their love story unfolded in a single neighborhood. In all my years as a pastor, this is my first wedding between a recently graduated doctor and a standing member of the parish council. For many years Mariano and Annie were hidden from each other in plain sight. They were near and yet far. Because they met at a church-sponsored event, its easy to discern the guiding hand of God, something we believe creates the best of marriages.

Among the scripture readings Annie and Mariano have chosen for us to hear today is a passage from the Song of Songs, the bible's collection of love poetry. It shows the enticement of hiddenness. One young lover stands behind a wall, gazing through windows, "peering through lattices." He addresses his love as the "dove in the clefts of the rock, in the secret recesses of the cliff," and he begs, "Let me see you, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and you are lovely." The Song of Songs is the only book of the bible that never explicitly mentions God. Yet Christians have adopted it among inspired books because it dwells on the mystery of love. In this case, you might say that God is the hidden lover, standing behind a wall, gazing through the windows. Or, that when we feel alone, God is the one who knows we are "in the clefts of the rock, in the secret recesses of the cliff." God begs, "Let me see you, let me hear your voice." We imagine this God as the matchmaker who sees lovers hidden, reveals them to each other, and in the process, displays his own love for them.

As today's second reading describes it, "God is greater than our hearts." The same epistle urges us to love not just "in word or speech, but in deed and truth." Annie and Mariano, you know this, but this is good advice to remember throughout one's life: When we love someone, it's important to tell them in words and to tell them in deeds. Actions demonstrate love. You see it from friendships to group homes. Through actions, other people can read our hearts, and our own love flowers.

Then, lest we think that love is only about one individual gaining personal pleasure or even one couple developing a stronger bond, Jesus prays in today's gospel that the Father may unite with us for a nobler purpose: He prays about us to the Father, "that they may be one... that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me." We make hidden love manifest not only for our own good, not only for the good of one couple, but for the good of the world.

Annie and Mariano, you are both poised to make a difference in the world, and we look forward to sharing life and love with you as a couple. As you make manifest the love that God hid within you, make it grow. Share it with the world.

*Saturday, September 25, 2021*