

THE CATHOLIC Globe ...in the classroom

CATHOLIC CATECHESIS
on a 'Global' level

ON THE RECORD Keys to building up a marriage from ground up



By CHARLIE MARTIN

If you follow these columns, you know I like to keep a watch on billboard charts, so this week, my attention wandered over to the country countdown. There I found Dan Shay's "From the Ground Up," Dan Smyers and Shay Mooney's hit from the duo's second studio album "Obsessed."

A country ballad inspired by the illnesses and death of the singers' grandparents, the duo commented that "From The Ground Up" is "the most special song we've ever written."

The song's character wonders if his beginning marriage will have the same endurance and tenderness as his grandparents' 65-year-long relationship. He pledges his effort to his wife and states that "we'll give all that we have." Sixty-five years from now, just like his grandparents, he will "kiss you goodnight and say I love you still."

The song is likely to be the latest representative in a long list of standards played at weddings. Understandably so, as the song aptly expresses the dream that every couple gets married with, that is, their love will be the foundation for a life shared together for many years.

Still, we know that almost one-half of marriages do not endure. While there are many reasons why marriages fail, the song hints at one way to minimize this possibility: Expect to continuously build the love up!

So what does that mean on an everyday experience of marriage? Here are some considerations based on my 32 years as a pastoral counselor/marriage and family therapist:

◆ Expect problems. The bliss of romantic love is not enough to keep love going. I often spell "love" w-o-r-k and g-r-o-w.

Regardless of how positive or difficult one's background, we all have much to learn. Don't be freaked out by problems.

◆ The song's character tells his wife that "I will be all you need." He's wrong. There are going to be occasions when a couple needs guidance.

When you are married, have no embarrassment admitting to problems. If possible, talk with other married friends or family members. Remember that counseling professionals, most of whom have faced problems in their own marriages and learned through these difficulties, are also there to help you.

◆ The heart of any marriage is feeling cared about. Nothing helps such a feeling flourish more than ongoing and expressed appreciation.

Even when problems are apparent, there are probably other areas of a relationship going well. Sure, get help for resolving difficulties, but also focus on what is going right. Express appreciation for your spouse.

◆ In our faith, marriage is a sacrament. This means that the relationship itself is an outward manifestation of God's presence in our lives.

Keep the grace of the sacrament flowing by making the commitment to be involved with your parish and making an awareness of God's presence a daily practice in the marriage.

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BIBLE TRIVIA

What liturgical season highlights watching and waiting for Jesus?

Answer: See page 15.

CHILDREN'S STORY

Jesus says it is important to be watchful

By JENNIFER FICCAGLIA
Catholic News Service

One day, Jesus and the apostles were on the Mount of Olives. The apostles wanted to know more about when the Son of Man would come at the end of the age and what signs there would be of his coming.

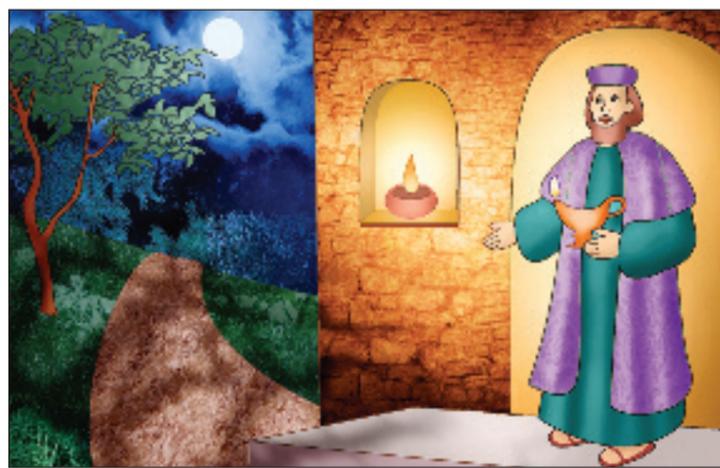
Jesus described what the earth would be like right before his return. He warned that people would try to trick them. Those people would lie and say that they were prophets, and some people would even pretend to be Jesus.

He warned his friends not to believe everything they heard and saw.

Jesus then compared the signs of his coming to a fig tree.

"Learn a lesson from the fig tree," he said. "When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see all these things, know that he is near, at the gates."

Jesus also let the apostles know how important it was to always be



ready for his return, because it could happen on any day, at any time.

"But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone," Jesus explained.

He said that on the day of his coming, people would be going about their daily lives — eating, drinking, getting married — just as they were doing before the flood came during Noah's time.

"They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away," Jesus said. "So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man."

He used the example of two men working in the fields and two women working at a grinding stone.

When the Son of Man comes, one of the men and one of the

women will be taken, Jesus said, and the others will be left behind.

"Therefore, stay awake!" Jesus warned his apostles. "For you do not know on which day your Lord will come."

"Be sure of this," Jesus added, "if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

READ MORE ABOUT IT:

Matthew 24

Q&A

1. What did the apostles want to know about Jesus' return?

2. What is one important thing Jesus told the apostles to do?

PUZZLE

Fill in the blanks to complete the following sentences about Advent wreaths. (For hints, see the U.S. bishops' website at www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/advent/about-advent-wreaths.cfm.)

1. An Advent wreath has _____ candles.
2. An Advent wreath's candles are purple and _____.
3. The purple candles represent _____, _____, preparatory sacrifices and good works.
4. An Advent wreath's third candle is lit on _____.

Answers: See page 15.

FEATURED SAINT

St. Nicholas of Myra

St. Nicholas was the bishop of Myra, Turkey, in the fourth century, and he was known for his piety and zeal.

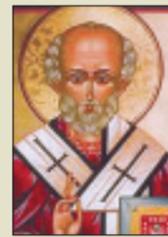
Few other facts are known about St. Nicholas, but there are plenty of legends.

One tells of a man who lost all of his money and could not afford the dowries needed so that his three daughters could be married. So, St. Nicholas walked by the man's house and tossed three bags

of gold into an open window. It is said the bags landed in shoes or stockings being dried by the fire.

That's why in some countries, children leave out their shoes or stockings to be filled with gifts on the saint's Dec. 6 feast day.

St. Nicholas was made popular in America by Dutch settlers, who called him by a different name: "Sint Niklaas," which evolved to "Santa Claus."



BIBLE ACCENT

Isaiah prophecies about the coming of Jesus

Pay close attention to the Scriptures being proclaimed during Advent. You will notice that many are from the Old Testament book of Isaiah.

You may wonder why, since Advent celebrates the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, and that story is in the Gospels.

But did you know that Isaiah contains prophecies about the Messiah?

For example, in Isaiah 7:14, we read, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; the young woman, pregnant and about to bear a son, shall name

him Emmanuel."

Isaiah 9:5-6 says, "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. ... They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. His dominion is vast and forever peaceful, upon David's throne."

And in Isaiah 53:3-7, we read that the Messiah was pierced and "bore the punishment that makes us whole, by his wounds we were healed."

It is exciting to read Isaiah's prophecies about the Messiah and see them fulfilled by Jesus.

GOLD

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