

50 Years On

*On the occasion of my parents' 50th wedding anniversary: June 14, 2001

The passing of time can only be appreciated in hindsight, yet the successive moments of it can only be realized as it occurs. Fifty years can seem like a long time, almost a lifetime in human years, yet but a brief flash when measured against the grand scale of existence. Fifty years. That's more than 18,262 days. Times twenty-four makes for a significant 1,095,720 hours. Or a mind-boggling 65,743,200 minutes. But, who's counting?

Numbers might give some perspective to the achievement of fifty years of marriage, but that's not the way to truly measure it. As the saying so often goes, "it's the quality, not the quantity". Nevertheless, the golden anniversary is a major milestone, a feat worthy of pomp and circumstance. It's bigger than a birthday, graduation or retirement. Let's face it, it's downright monumental. Many marriages, unfortunately, don't stand that test of time. This, despite the vows on the wedding day that talk about for better or worse, richer or poorer, in sickness and in health. We see this reflected in the often sad state of affairs in our country and elsewhere in the world. The statistics I've just seen are stating that of all American households, only 24% of them are married couples with children. That's a serious drop from 43% in 1950.

During your years together you've witnessed and experienced many things. Amazing technological advances. Different and varied locales and cultures. The passing of seasons, over and over through the years. The birth and growth of children and grandchildren. Lots of laughter, lots of tears.

As a son I get to view and appreciate your accomplishment from my somewhat narrow perspective. But I appreciate it now as I write this, and I'll continue to marvel at it as time marches on. I am now in my middle years, blessed with life, health, a marriage and children of my own. There is a debt I owe that cannot be repaid, yet it is here in my heart, coupled with gratitude for two parents who've weathered the ups and downs of my youth. And I am but one of three. My sister and brother also surely have treasures in their hearts because of you both.

Marriage is a unique melding of lives. God teaches us that the two become one. That sounds mystical--and it is! It is a mystery beyond basic human understanding. Like all great mysteries, the experience cannot be understood or shared adequately to single people. Only those who also have spent a lifetime together as husband and wife can properly relate. I can only imagine it and aspire to it.

The road you both have traveled has not been a smooth, flat and easy-going one. It would be naive to assert so. Like all marriages, especially those that have endured to such great length, it has required countless sacrifices and mighty effort. I know that you both have a great love and faith in the Lord. That

is why you are still together. There is no doubt of that in my mind. As you examine your legacy, know that your great love and care for your family and friends is both appreciated and is rippling outwards through the lives you touch. It is a marvelous thing! Spreading love and joy with Biblical values and constant effort--that results in outgoing love that is perpetual. There is no end to what we can accomplish for good when we work together in union with God's will.

I thank you for showing me the way. Your values have been passed on. I haven't learned it all at once or all in one place. Sometimes the lessons have been renewed from other sources, but I know where the first exposures came from. Parenting is difficult. So is marriage. That is because we are humans and we are often difficult to get along with. Ok, I will speak for myself...I'm often hard to get along with. I also look around me, though, and I can see the world and the lack of understanding, love and effort. All the more reason why we must persevere. We pass on hope to those who need it.

Thank you for being there for me, for raising me and providing for me. Thank you for doing the same with my siblings and our children. On this great anniversary we are joining in a circle of love and God and Jesus are holding hands, too and the Holy Spirit is alive and involved in and through each of us. Happy Anniversary!