

## **With Jesus, Anything**

Reflecting on my 60th year, I was beautifully interrupted by a snow storm that knocked the power right out of us; we were babysitting grandson Jacob while his parents cheered the Kansas City Chiefs onto victory in their division at the local stadium. (Congratulations to The Chiefs for nearly making the Super Bowl.) Annette and I shivered, laughed, and bathed Jacob in the kitchen sink by candlelight.

We love our new digs but it seems we moved into the Bermuda triangle of power sources. Breezes snap electric lines and blow up transformers. O well...My decisive word this year: If 'without Jesus we can do nothing' (JN 15:5b), then with Him, we can do anything.

That first and mostly applies to married life. I love Annette more than ever but am less sure of my capacity to actually love her as St. Paul implores husbands, you know, like Jesus offered Himself to the Church. OK, not there yet. It helps to know that marriage itself roots and grounds me in my manhood through her authentic, distinctly feminine self.

Listen to what St. John Paul II says about marriage in Theology of the Body: 'Marriage penetrates into the dignity ascribed to humanity as image-bearers by virtue of creation, and at the same time the dignity ascribed to sinful humanity by virtue of redemption.' Good news for original sinners like me. In marriage's unflattering mirror, I am humbled by Jesus who always invites me into mercy. From that artesian well I draw constantly and am empowered to give myself more and better to her. In the end, I will be judged by love, the love I gave to that woman. With Him, I can do anything.

That applies pointedly to my love for the Church. This messy witness of Jesus' unfailing love takes more love than I have. I've only to sink a little deeper into the mercy pool to rediscover my gratitude and ardor for her. Strength rises as I wait on Him, His heart for her, that I might love her more, and better. By that I mean the many people I serve every day who are her—broken, beautiful, members, yet often half-blind. It helps to recall what I did not see until I did. Pair that with the realization that I still don't see that well and you can understand why I cannot love her without Him. But with Him, I can do anything for her, His Bride.

Recognizing the value of trouble in loving the Church helps a lot. I use to shy away from trouble. But now I kind of like it. No sadist, me, but a realist who recognizes blessing and building up the Church provokes the rage of Satan himself who wants to keep her divided and weak, barren in her capacity to bring forth a vast harvest of spiritual children. I have a big enemy who hates what I do. So I am learning to bear his vengefulness patiently, assessing trouble as a sure sign of heading in the right direction--all the while laughing at my self-seriousness and the (comparatively) weak efforts of the enemy to thwart mine. With Jesus, I can do anything for generations yet-to-come.

I love getting older because life gets simpler. It becomes more about Him. In that way I grow young, as eager as a well-loved child to see Him face-to-face.

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'Love is a sweet tyranny, and one who loves has no other language but one... which always has a never-fading youthfulness on the lips of one who loves.'

Archbishop Luis Maria Martinez

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