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## Pastor's Column

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### The Charism of Permanence

St. Thomas More Parish has an abundance of married couples who have been married for 50 years, 60 years, and even more. Paul and Bette Johansing recently celebrated their 71st wedding anniversary!

This gift of so many marriages that have lasted for so long is a real witness of faith for the entire Parish, and especially for younger married couples in their efforts to be faithful to their marital duties and responsibilities.

On a fairly regular basis, I have the opportunity and the privilege of presiding over anniversary celebrations with renewal of marriage vows. Each one is always a special moment for me, and I know it is for the family who celebrates.

These celebrations remind us that permanent commitments are possible. And not only are they possible, they are incredibly needed today. Maybe more so today than ever before!

As I lead in the celebration of the Eucharist with families celebrating, let's say, 50 years of life and love, of joy and struggle, the message is shouted out in the silences of the Mass—"Yes, all the hard work and sacrifice were worth it! There is peace, stability, and security that has been created and given to this family because of our decision to be faithful to God and to one another. We have given a precious gift to our children and grandchildren that will make a difference in their lives. And there were no shortcuts to this gift! It simply took 50 years to create the gift!"

There are no easy routes and shortcuts with Gospel living. Jesus demonstrated that to us with the giving of His very life. If we want to hand on good gifts, real inheritance, to our children and grandchildren, it will cost us dearly. It will cost us in our efforts to be faithful and to be committed to the promises we make to each other.

There are many people in our world today who believe that lifetime commitments are not possible or that they are not needed.

Our Faith teaches us otherwise. Our God is the Faithful Lover. We are reminded of this over and over again in the Scriptures.

Yahweh says through Moses and His prophets, "I am your God. You are my people, and I shall be with you always."

The basis of our Faith is that God has chosen us, each and every one of us, to live in covenant with Him. Our God is the God who never walks away from us, who is always there for us, no matter how many times we may walk away from God. The God who loves us unconditionally is the God who calls us each day to live in covenant with God.

As married persons, as vowed religious, as single people living and awaiting God's promises in our lives, we are called to be faithful to one another, day in and day out—as God is faithful to us.

The most needed charism in this new millennium, I believe, is the charism of permanence—the belief that we can make covenants with one another as God has made with us; that we can be faithful to one another, unconditionally, as God has been faithful to us—in life, until death, into eternity.

The most needed charism for this new millennium is the charism of permanence. As a People of Faith, let us imitate our God and give this gift to our families, friends, and world. This gift of permanence, for which we are willing to sacrifice until death, does bring peace, stability, and security to the next generation!

Can we, and with God's help, are we willing to say to those around us, as our God says to us, "I am your spouse, your lover, your friend, your parent, your sibling, your child, and you are my 'people.' I will ALWAYS be with you?"

Let us pray for each other as we continue to "permanentize" our relationships.

*Fr. Mike*