



“Yeah, I’m getting divorced too,” one of my co-workers replied to my boss the other day. The two ladies then exchanged stories about their horrible husbands and that “awful institution” called “marriage.”

Both of their husbands cheated on them, and both of them dealt with a multitude of other issues with their husbands that only served to add to the pain of their failed marriages. It was awful to hear what they went through, and I don’t blame them for feeling hurt by the whole experience.

“There’s so much of that out there!” my boss exclaimed. “I know one of my girlfriends who is cheating on her husband and I know a couple of other people where both of them are cheating. I guess you’re lucky if it doesn’t happen to you.” Then my boss looked over at me and, knowing I’m engaged, said “sorry, but I never want to get married again.”
“No,” I wanted to say, “I’m sorry.”

But I didn’t get it out. I was too busy sorting through all of the reactions in my own head. I ended up remaining silent for the entire conversation because somehow I didn’t think that these women would understand.

I didn’t think they’d understand that if I said, “my fiancé and I are never going to have that issue” that my statement would be one of fact and confidence, not one of blind love and young bravado.

I didn’t think they’d understand what I mean if I said “marriage isn’t just a luck of the draw. It doesn’t work like a lottery.” Because, to them, it does, while for me, I know that it doesn’t.

Marriage isn’t a drawing of the straws, where if your spouse cheats on you, well, “sorry, you just drew the short straw.

There’s nothing you could have done to prevent it!” It’s not an institution where if you are a strong, happy, and healthy couple you’re just “the lucky ones.” It’s not an institution where the fates decide who “wins” and who “loses.” It’s not a

promise you enter into like buying a lottery ticket – someone will win the jackpot while most people just buy empty tickets.

Yet this is how our society has been trained to see marriage. This approach to marriage has so infiltrated our society that people refuse to believe that there should be anything like “marriage prep,” because how do you prep yourself for a game of chance? There’s no way of making yourself any luckier, so why are you bothering to work on it? Our society has abandoned the idea that marriage is something you work on, and even more so, it has forgotten, and thus doesn’t understand, that marriage is a calling.

It is a foreign concept that one would be able to say with complete confidence “my spouse will never cheat on me.”

And yet, I can say that. I can say that because I have a faith and a God who stand behind me in that statement. And I can say that because the love my fiancé and I share is not human, it is divine.

We love each other because we love God and we have discovered that in loving one another, we get to love God more fully. Moreover, the love that we have for one another is divine in origin. God gave it to us at our baptism and it had a full 15-20ish years to grow and mature so that when we met, it blossomed.

That makes us blessed, but it does not make us lucky. We both worked hard on ourselves and on making God the center of our world before we even knew the other existed. In doing so, we returned to God the gift He gave us in that first sacrament. We returned to Him our hearts, and with them we returned to the Creator the divine love placed in our hearts for one another.

God knows how to nourish our hearts and souls better than anyone. In nourishing our hearts, He nourished the love that grew in them for each other so that when we met, my soul immediately knew who my fiancé was. (And it only took me a couple of months to catch up with what my soul knew at first sight!)

We have a faith that can make these promises. Promises of faithfulness, love, commitment. Our faith allows us to make these promises because He who gave us love was faithful in His love until the end. He who originated love in our hearts died for us out of that same love. We as Catholics are granted the same strength of faithfulness to the end when we return our love to the one who is love.

When we participate in making our love a sacrament, when we make a way for God’s grace to enter the world every day, when we demonstrate outwardly our inner devotion, we can say with full knowledge and confidence that we are not in a game of luck. We are in an institution of work and prayer, and we can rest assured that our success rests squarely on the shoulders of our prayerful work and the support of a God who made the universe.

Blessed Pope John Paul II is famous for his line: *“man finds himself only in true gift*

of self." If we only receive what we give away, then we must strive every day to give our hearts and our love back to Christ.
Giving a gift back doesn't take luck. It takes work.