



At the end of each summer, my husband and I receive a letter that urges us to have our heating system checked before the Fall. It's usually slipped through the mail slot on an oppressive August day, when more warmth is the last thing I'm thinking about it. But I realize the wisdom of preventive maintenance now, before a breakdown occurs.

Marriages, too, benefit from preventive maintenance. Do you need to discuss a stressful issue before it erupts? Are you looking for an activity or two to rejuvenate your marriage? The end of summer is a good time to plan for marriage maintenance, before the busyness of Fall kicks in. Here's a five-point list to get started:

- **Talk Turkey.** Thanksgiving (and Christmas) turkey, that is. Where will you be spending the holidays? Do you turn into jugglers, trying to balance the expectations of both sets of in-laws? If the two of you agree on a plan now, you'll be ready to deal with the situation in a way that's fair to everyone. An added advantage: If you're flying for the holidays, you'll be able to shop early for cheaper air fares and the dates you want.
- **Fall for each other**—again. Fun fall getaways abound, everything from pumpkin patches and apple-picking to colorful college football games and tailgate parties. Get out your calendars now and pencil in a few dates. Don't forget that romantic drive to view the fall foliage.
- **Show me the money.** The last quarter of the year can bring higher household expenses, including costs associated with the holidays. Can your budget handle it? Be prepared by reviewing your financial status and making any needed adjustments to your spending and saving.
- **Go back to school.** Maybe not literally, but Fall is an excellent time to learn a new skill or try a new activity. Check out the offerings from your local public school system or community college. Read the parish bulletin or website to see what's being planned. Sign up—finally!—to walk for your favorite cause. Learning or doing something new, especially if you do it together, can enrich your marriage. If you decide on different activities, share your experiences with your spouse and

bring a new dimension to your marriage.

- **Get fit.**—spiritually. Summer often means a break from routine. Have you let your spiritual practices slide over the past couple months? Rather than become discouraged, make a September resolution to improve. Schedule time for prayer and spiritual reading, even if it's only a few minutes. Consider setting aside time to pray with your spouse (see *Who Me, Pray?...With Her?*). Bring closure to the summer by celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation.