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My Parents' Anniversary

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Distinctly Catholic

Fifty-eight years ago, my parents were married at Our Lady of Lourdes church here in Hampton, Connecticut. I can just see the steeple beyond the pine trees as I write this morning.

They were married two days after Christmas because he was home for Christmas from his service in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. She had wanted to get married before he went off to basic training, but he refused, worried he would be sent to Korea and she would be a young widow. But, in early December 1952, he found out he was being sent to Puerto Rico to teach English to Puerto Rican recruits. My parents would spend the first two years of their married life on that blessed island.

Like all marriages, my parents' union was not without its challenges, but over the years, their love deepened and grew. In her later years, my mother was afflicted with Parkinson's and became completely dependent upon my father. Then, after they were in a bad car accident, he never left her side for the seven months that she lingered, closer to death than life, but each day and all day, he was at her side. I have never seen a love so thorough, so complete, so unselfish, so heroic. It was one of the great blessings of my life - and of the lives of many others who witnessed it - to have seen such love up close, still more to be a fruit of the union that produced it.

My mother has gone to God but I am sure she is celebrating this anniversary there. We will take Dad out to dinner to a restaurant they especially enjoyed going to together. And, I shall thank God that in a culture that often speaks of love in the most cynical of ways, I was fortunate enough to experience the antidote to cynicism, authentic, generous, full-hearted love.

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