

## **Traveling Companion: A Harmonizing couple**

Fr. Michael Tracey

A couple arrive to plan a wedding. It is my first encounter with them. Following some surface questions, I get down to business and begin to ask some questions that help probe the depth of the couple's relationship and commitment. I begin by asking: how did you meet? I am always fascinated by the diverse responses. Some knew each other in high school, went their separate ways following high school but somehow, mysteriously, they gravitated back to each other. A serious relationship developed and a sense of compatibility was discovered. In other situations, someone was invited on a date with another couple to accompany someone else. A relationship ensued and bonded. In another situation, a blind date was set up and the blindness developed into an all-seeing relationship. The mystery of how a couple met always fascinated me.

My second question leads me deeper into the couple's relationship and level of maturity. I ask: Of all the persons you have dated or known over the years, why do you think this person is right for you? Why do you want to spend the rest of your life with this person? The answers are both interesting and revealing: I watch the interaction as they try to answer my question, especially the reaction to their fiancé's response. The answers are both diverse and revealing. Some indicate that they love each other. Others, share some qualities they admire in the other person. Some volunteer that they are compatible with each other others get all choked with emotions and even tears as they struggle to suggest what they admire or see as special in the other person.. often embarrassment takes over as the one on the receiving end finds it difficult to accept the compliments being shared.

Once we have probed the introductory questions, we continue with FOCCUS, the pre-marriage inventory instrument which gives us a perspective on the couple's compatibility level on various crucial aspects of married life.

Recently, I met with a couple anticipating marriage. Then, I discovered a couple who were in real harmony. Dina was in her mid-thirties, a medical doctor, now doing a fellowship. She lived in Kansas City. I had known Dina while she was student at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg. She became a Catholic while there. We had kept in touch through email and she visited the Coast in December. Jonathan, her fiancé, was in his early forties. He was an investment broker with a very prestigious investment company. He was based in Dallas.

I was curious as to how two professional individuals from different geographic centers got together, developed a relationship, a possible compatibility and were exploring the possibility of married life together. I didn't have to wait long for the answer.

Both had concentrated on building their careers first and becoming self-sufficient. Both had dated periodically while their careers were developing but they were not ready to make a permanent commitment to anyone. They shied away from bars and other gathering places to look for a soul mate. Dina dated some doctor friends but did not find the degree of compatibility she desired. Jonathan dated some also but could not find a compatible soul mate.

e-Harmony.com came to the rescue. Both, obviously, independently, put their profile on the web site. They also included some insights into the kind of soul mate they might be interested in pursuing a relationship with. One of the needs in a soul mate that they expressed is that they should be Catholic, practicing, and committed to a deeper role for religion in their marriage. Both delved deeper into their expectations of a soul mate and included them in their profile. Both received considerable possible matches. Jonathan even got over sixty possible matches. Sifting through all the data from possible compatible soul mates, a relationship between Dina and Jonathan was born.

So, the next time, I see an ad. On TV for e.Harmony, I will be able to say that I met my first harmonizing couple.