

Intoxicated by love

Fr. Michael Tracey

On Tuesday morning, I went out for my usual 3:30 a.m. bike ride along the beach. The last vestiges of the moon shone dimly on the water. The frogs made their presence known by their distinctive burps. A lone car approached slowly and eventually passed. Maybe the occupant was pondering a night at the casino.

As I peddled along, I noticed a couple in the distance ahead of me. They were going in the same direction. Creeping up behind them, I hoped they would notice and not be shocked into reality by a biker whizzing past them.

They were a young couple, probably in their late twenties. Both were dressed in shorts and T-shirts. The young woman had her arm around the young man's neck. His hand gravitated toward her posterior. They walked aimlessly, as if drunk with love. Obviously, they were not out exercising for the good of their health at that ungodly hour. They probably had some more loving motives. My hunch might prove correct later.

I bid them "Good morning" and passed on. They acknowledged my greeting and continued walking. In the back of my mind, I sensed that I might encounter them again on my return trip.

As I began my return trip, I kept peering ahead to see if I could see the silhouette of a couple in the distance. Trying to calculate the couple's meandering speed and my own, I tried to plod out where I might meet them again on the path.

In the distance, I noticed a car. Presuming it belonged to the couple, I concluded that they might be sitting in the car. Then I noticed it. I avoided the accident before it happened. Just ahead in the dim light, I saw something on the path ahead of me. As I got closer, I noticed the couple stretched out on the concrete, huddled close together. I sped by in silence and left them in their new-found space alone.

The encounter brought a chuckle to my lips. Thinking about the couple, I realized that practicality was usurped by love; that a warm concrete bed was much cozier than a water one; that what often seems illogical is really true.

A few days before my encounter with the romancing, concrete couple, I met with a couple preparing to get married later next year. I always like to ask couples how they met and am fascinated by how often chance encounters end up being romantic and commitment encounters. This couple told me that both of them met at a wedding three years ago. One had been invited by the groom, the other by the bride. Both, coming from opposite directions, arrived at the church doors around the same time. Instinctively, he said to himself, "that sure looks like a very pretty woman." She had similar thoughts. They both met, talked, danced during the wedding celebration and in another year, they will dance together as man and wife at their own wedding.

People ask me constantly why I go out biking at such an ungodly hour. Of course, I can come up with all kinds of practical reasons. It is a very quiet time of the morning and I can enjoy my own thoughts and my own company without distractions.. There are few distractions. It is the coolest time of the day or night, especially during the summer months. It is the time of the morning that one notices parts of life that otherwise would be drowned out by people rushing around, busily going about their focused business. But most of all, during those rare mornings you get a glimpse of a special part of human life that defies explanation or logic. It just happens and the only response can be a "Wow!"

One of those rare moments happened on Tuesday morning when I encountered a young couple intoxicated by love. Then I remembered what Irish playwright, George Bernard Shaw said, "When two people are under the influence of the most violent, most insane, most delusive, and most transient of passions, they are required to swear that they will remain in that excited, abnormal and exhausting condition until death do them part."