

The First Dialoguers

By Mary Sue Eck

(Excerpted from the Fall 1985 *Worldwide Family Spirit* magazine)

I was in second grade when I heard the remark the first time. I was marching in with my class for Sunday Mass at S.S. Peter and Paul's Church in Springfield, Illinois. A woman walking beside us waved at my grandparents who were getting out of their car nearby. She then turned to her friend and said, 'That's George & Alvina Reisch. They have the best marriage in town!' Several of the other children around me heard this also and they turned to see the couple. I announced with pride, 'That's my Grandma and Grandpa!'

Again and again through the years, as I would meet another friend of my grandparents, they would whisper to me, 'You should be proud of them. They have the best marriage in town!' **OUR SACRAMENT MUST BE VISIBLE**

I loved to accompany my grandmother to buy a hat. She had the most beautiful hats I had ever seen. She would begin to try them on and when the salesperson would approach she would say, 'Hello, I'm Mrs. George Reisch!' There was something about the way she said that name that made salespeople snap to attention. I could almost read their thoughts, 'She must be an important lady!' One day I told my grandmother, "You say your name like you were a queen." "I am," she said. "I married a king!"

As a teenager I would ask grandma questions about her life with grandpa. Once she said, "We stayed in love because we were always committed to each other first. Every day when your grandfather would come home from work we would go to our room and spend a half hour talking together. None of our children disturbed us during that time unless it was a dire emergency." (They had eleven children. Five died in infancy.) I checked this out with my mother and learned it was true. "When their bedroom door was closed," she said, "we didn't knock unless we were dying!" **OUR SACRAMENT IS FUNDED BY DAILY LOVE.**

When I began dating Larry I often took him to my grandparent's home. They were fun to be around, and even though I was one of forty grandchildren, they made me feel special, and always welcomed my friends. As we left their home one night, Larry commented on how much they cared for each other. 'They look across the room at one another and love seems to spark between them. I've never seen anything like it before.' We sat on their front steps and pledged to each other that we would have the same kind of marriage. 'Ours will be the best marriage in town, Larry, just like theirs,' I vowed. **OUR SACRAMENT IS RECEIVED.**

A few nights before our wedding, my grandma told me, "Marriages really are made in heaven, Mary Sue. It's people who mess them up! Don't mess yours up!" I promised her I never would. But I broke my promise. Not at first; not for over three years. But I became caught up in the children's lives and then in the glitter of the world, calling us to success and status. Little by little 'things' took precedence over our love.

Sometimes Larry would remind me that we weren't much like our original role models. "They were just lucky," I'd reply. "They were just one in a million."

My grandparents died three months apart, to the exact minute. The night after grandma's funeral my grandfather paced the floor of their bedroom. We could hear him walking back and forth endlessly. Suddenly he came out and sat down at a desk and began writing. Finally he looked up and said, 'I don't know if I heard this many years ago, or if I just made it up.' He handed me this poem:

When your eyes, so bright
Have lost their light
When your face, so dear
Is no longer here
I don't know what I'll do.
If the Master knew
How I love you
Don't you think that He
Would take me too?
T'will break my heart
When we must part
For I've grown
So used to you.

After I had read it he looked at me, and in a low, shaking voice whispered, "I fell in love with her when I was nine years old. She skipped by my house and I thought she was an angel, she was so beautiful. I went inside and told my mother that I had just seen the girl I was going to marry. In all my life I never loved another." Then he looked away and said, "I won't have to wait long. No one could ever say no to her. The Lord won't be able to resist her, either, when she tells Him how much I need to be with her."

I cried then, not so much for him, but for Larry and me and our broken dreams.

Several years later, in our 90/90 letters, we both wrote about my grandparents. In our long dialogue afterwards, we pledged again to begin to live a life of love like theirs. We laughed as we recalled the times they had spent together alone, every day of their lives. "They were probably the first dialoguing couple in the world, honey," Larry said. "Now it's our turn to be that sign of love."

In her senior year at college, our daughter Paula wrote a term paper for her Christian Marriage class. The title of her paper was, "Marriage - My Mom and Dad". It was the story of our love! OUR SACRAMENT IS EFFICACIOUS. IT CREATES IN OTHERS WHAT IT SIGNIFIES.

From age to age. . PRAISE GOD!