

## Love & Marriage

“Love and Marriage go together like a horse and carriage” - at least according to Frank Sinatra they do. Well I've never been very 'horsey' and have never ridden in a carriage; so I couldn't really comment. But according to statistics love and marriage are going together less and less in today's society. Couples are preferring to live together, unite their lives in other ways, and for some people this works. I have friends who have chosen just that route. For some I am confident in their love and commitment; but I've also recently seen the ease with which someone can walk away from a long term, “live-in” relationship and the pain it brings. In their own words, it would have been different if they had been married - they would have had a reason to work things through.

I am a great believer in marriage. I think my friend is right: there is something about that spiritual and legal commitment that binds couples even if they themselves want to cut and run. Before our wedding day, my husband and I were given the wonderful image of being bound together as a cord of three strands (Ecclesiastes 4:12); and it has indeed been a great encouragement for us - even to the point when, during an argument once, we had to laugh over the fact that God was binding us together but I was attempting to sabotage everything by bending over backwards and hacking at the ropes with all my might!

Marriage, it has been said, is no bed of roses. However, I'd like to disagree. I think it's just like a bed of roses – a bed of real roses, thorns and all. It has moments of beauty and sweetness like the petals and scent. It has buds of new growth and excitement. It has stems of ordinariness that provide the day to day nourishment. However, it also has thorns, the moments of pain that make your heart bleed. In some ways it is sharing these painful moments, choosing to talk to your husband or wife about things, no matter how bad, that bind a couple together.

But even more so in marriage, it is knowing that even in those times when you think that you can't bear to spend another moment in your wife's presence because you need your own space, or you fear that this time things have gone too far and your husband can't possibly want to be with you any more, on one special day you both chose to stand up in front of family, friends and God to commit yourselves legally to each other for life through those good and bad times. There is a real comfort and security in knowing your partner feels the same way about you and has chosen to love you, warts and all, forever and stay with you always. It is this security in love which helps make the fragrant times even sweeter.

Ruth Barry

*Ruth has worked for our churches, first as Parish Assistant and then as Rectory Assistant. She is married to Alistair. They have two children, Jacob and Megan.*