

In this insightful guide to married life, Kathy Hasty addresses a wide range of practical concerns and offers responses that are leavened with profound spiritual insights, laced with a delightful sense of humor, and offered utterly without judgment. Written as a series of short letters to newlyweds, followed by helpful prompts for discussion, this book provides a wonderful resource for couples wishing to grow in their marriage.

**RICHARD GAILLARDETZ**, *Joseph Professor of Catholic Systematic Theology at Boston College and the author of *A Daring Promise: A Spirituality of Christian Marriage* (Liguori)*

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What we love about *Letters to a Young Married Couple* is that it is both honest and frank. The format makes it an easy read. We love how the author fearlessly addresses the very real stressors newlyweds face and offers pragmatic insight into how to face those stressors. We are also thrilled that the author challenges newlyweds to openly face and discuss both the excitement of their newly wedded life and many of the potential or current road bumps all couples face. Hats off to a challenging, user-friendly, job well done!

**HOLLY CARBO & MANDI CHAPMAN**, *co-authors, *Strong Foundations: A Marriage Preparation Program for Catholic Couples* (Twenty-Third Publications)*

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*Letters to a Young Married Couple* is candid, practical, and, most of all, written with love. Kathy Hasty shares with young couples her experiences and lessons learned during her three decades of marriage. Kathy's book reflects the attitude of "accompaniment" encouraged by Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia*. This book fills a need in the church's ministry to newlyweds.

**JOHN BOSIO**, *presenter, author of *Happy Together: The Catholic Blueprint for a Loving Marriage* (Twenty-Third Publications), and former marriage and family therapist*

Hasty's gentle observations invite faith-filled reflection, and her carefully posed questions open the door to deep and loving conversation for newly married couples.

**CLAIRE NOONAN, DMIN**, *Vice President for Mission and Ministry, Dominican University, River Forest, Illinois, and author of **Full of Grace: A New Year of Life for Your Baby and for You!** (Twenty-Third Publications).*

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“For God loves nothing so much as the One who dwells in wisdom” (Wis 7:27–28). Kathy Hasty’s book is a treasure chest of wisdom. Her insights, cautions, and advice regarding what it takes for marriage to deepen and flourish over the years provide a road map not only for newlyweds, but for the seasoned traveler such as myself. This book is a must read!

**DR. PATRICIA COONEY HATHAWAY**, *Professor of Spirituality and Theology at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Detroit, Michigan, and author of **Weaving Faith and Experience: A Woman’s Perspective** (Franciscan Media).*

# Letters to a Young Married Couple

*Practical  
Wisdom and  
Guidance for  
the Newly  
Married*

KATHY F. HASTY



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To our newlyweds,STEPHANIE & CHRIS  
and DAN & ANGELINA, as they begin  
their sacred adventure

**“As I have loved you,  
so you also should love  
one another.”** *John 13:34*

**“For one human being to love  
another: that is perhaps the  
most difficult of all our tasks,  
the ultimate, the last test  
and proof, the work for which  
all other work is but preparation.”**

*Rainer Maria Rilke, Letters to a Young Poet*

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Finally, deepest gratitude goes to the one with whom I have shared this journey of marriage, my husband, Terry, for taking that leap of faith with me on our wedding day and never looking back. It has been, from the start, a graced adventure. Our love keeps unfolding, even after all these years. To God be the glory.

## FOREWORD



The inspiration for this work came in a moment, but the preparation for it has occurred over more than three decades of my married life. The experience of marriage has been, for me, lovely, demanding, wondrous, difficult, joyous, and soul-shaping. It has also been graced beyond measure. Distilled down to its essence, it has been, all along the way, a sacred adventure. My husband and I have become ever more aware that we are not in this alone; we have an unseen Partner who is with us in all of it and who is always at work. Without this Divine Partner, I doubt that we would still be standing. But God has been with us, and God's grace has been more than sufficient.

I offer the reflections on these pages with both love and humility. I am not an expert on marriage by any stretch, and I doubt than any long-married person would claim to be. We who have traveled this road a while know well what love has asked of us and the growing up that this required. I write these pages simply as a fellow traveler on the journey, one who has embraced this vocation I have been called to, and who has tried to pay attention, to learn and to grow, and to become more the person and partner God calls me to be. What I offer here are some perspectives and understandings that have become clear to me as my husband and I have walked this sacred journey. Some of these we learned the hard way, through our own mistakes and immaturities. But life is a good teacher, and God has always invited us to learn and to grow through all of it. Other learnings and realizations have come through

life experiences, through prayer and the practice of our faith, and through the many wisdom people in our lives. For these we are immensely grateful.

This work is not meant to be an exhaustive look at the many aspects of marriage, nor can it be. And it is not just for Catholic Christians, though I write from this particular faith perspective, which has shaped me in more ways than I can say. I write these pages simply as a way of companioning those starting out on the sacred journey of marriage. I pray that it can offer reassurance, especially at those times when the journey is difficult, lonely, confusing, or even frightening. I have been there—and I know that at those moments we can be strengthened by someone else who has been there, who encourages us and helps us to stay the course. And so I offer this as bread for your journey to all of you who are in the early months and years of marriage. Know that it comes from a fellow traveler who has walked much of the same terrain, who can point out some features of the landscape, and some of the wonders, dangers, and invitations you will likely experience. My desire, through these pages, is to walk with you as a friend by offering some reflections in each letter and then inviting you to explore the topic further through the discussion questions provided. There are practical suggestions included as well, which may be a help to you, as they have been to me. May these words be a blessing to you, and may you know all the gifts God longs to give you as your love unfolds.

*Kathy F. Hastig*

JANUARY 30, 2017



## *Letter One*

# Overview and Rules for the Road

Dear Newlyweds,

You've begun an incredible and sacred journey. Do you find yourself thinking often of your wedding day, and remembering all the beautiful moments from that day and your honeymoon? I'll bet you can still see, in your mind's eye, that moment when you stood there facing each other and you promised to love and honor each other "in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health" all the days of your life. It was a powerful moment, wasn't it? Now you've begun to live the promise that you made.

There is a lot of joy in the early months of marriage—and some adjustment too! I remember well those early months in my own marriage. It was an exciting time, and we reveled in the joys of our new life together. At the same time, we both felt a bit like we were in uncharted territory as we adjusted to this new state of life. We were finding out some things we never knew about each other, even discovering some differ-

ences that we hadn't realized before. At times we had arguments over silly little things, and we would say later, "Why in the world did we get so upset about that?" And sometimes a few bigger arguments erupted, rooted in some of the power struggles that typically surface in the first year of marriage. Don't be alarmed if that happens to you too. Every couple navigates this terrain and most do it successfully, though not without some growing pains. A few key perspectives might really help as you make your way through some of these initial adjustments to married life. Here are some that we learned that I want to share with you.

***Expect some challenges!*** I wish I could promise you a smooth ride, but the truth is that the journey is an adventure, and it's not always smooth. There are going to be twists and turns and challenges along the way in your marriage, just as there are challenges sometimes in your work or in your health or in your relationships with your families. So expect some twists and turns. Know that you've got each other to face them with, and that's a great gift. It's wonderful beyond words to come home to a person who offers a listening ear, a hug, and some words of consolation, especially when life's challenges weigh you down. When you feel like you're in the midst of a storm, marriage can be like coming out of the rain and sitting under an umbrella with the person you love most. Spouses really do become the "shelter in the storm" for each other, and their mutual love offers protection and comfort. Looking back now, I see how important this is and what a gift it is if you can get that right early in marriage. To be honest, it took us some time to learn to be this "shelter in the storm" for each other. But we finally did, and we realized the blessing that comes from a sheltering love.

***Be a good listener to each other.*** This was one of the gifts my husband and I gave to each other from the first time we met. We listened to each other, sometimes for hours! You, too, have probably spent hours talking with one another, listening to each other's thoughts, dreams, and life experiences. Keep on listening well to each other! We learned that you don't have to agree all the time, either. It's okay to feel differently about something or to see something differently. Because we each bring some truth to a situation, there is much to be gained from respectful listening and from trying to see something from the other's point of view. A wise friend once taught me to ask myself, especially if I was bristling over something, "*Is there another way that I could look at this?*" What a difference that made, when I took the time to really think about it! Learning to honor another way of seeing can make all the difference. It can bring peace to one's heart and it can reestablish the peace between spouses.

***Make forgiveness a cornerstone of your life together.*** I can't emphasize this enough. Robert Quillen, quoted in *Family Traditions that Last a Lifetime*, said that "a happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers." When we live up close and personal with another person, we will inevitably irritate and hurt each other at times, even when we don't mean to. That's real life. My husband and I learned that you can expend a lot of energy in the power struggle about being right, or you can decide that harmony in the relationship matters more than being right. The real question for couples becomes: Can we keep our relationship the priority? And can we do what love requires when we hurt each other: apologize, forgive, and reconcile? Forgiveness is like a "reset button." Without it, we'll just accumulate layer upon layer of hurt, and then our hearts can harden as we become mired in it. Jesus knew well

this human tendency when he taught that we should forgive each other from the heart. We're all a work in progress, and we all need forgiveness at times. I'm part of the chorus of long-time married couples who say unequivocally that this is one of the keys to a happy marriage!

**Pray.** Since your marriage is a three-way covenant between you, your spouse, and God, *God is in it with you*. You want your marriage to work; your families and your friends want your marriage to work; and most of all, **God** wants your marriage to work! No one is more invested in making your marriage happy and holy and successful than **God** is! I try to stay mindful of the fact that God is the invisible third partner in my marriage. I want to encourage you to stay mindful of that too, and to keep yourself connected to God by making a little time each day for prayer. My husband and I have learned the power of staying plugged into God, individually and together. We've tried some different ways of praying together over the years, and we have learned to keep it simple and genuine. Besides weekly worship, our regular prayer practices include praying together from our hearts at dinnertime and sometimes before we go to sleep. We pray also at special moments when we're facing a challenge, when our kids have a special need, or when our gratitude to God is overflowing. We also make some time for individual prayer each day. Our prayer keeps us steeped in the knowledge that we are held by God and anchored in God. If you're new at praying together, you might just join hands to pray an "Our Father" together each day, and then bless each other by tracing the cross on each other's forehead. This simple but beautiful practice will help you remember that you are held by God and anchored together in God.

I hope this helps. You're on an amazing journey together. Keep the faith, and know that you have the support and prayers of those who have walked this journey before you!

In Christ,  
*A fellow traveler on the journey*

**TO TALK ABOUT TOGETHER...**

*Can you recall a particular moment when your spouse  
consoled you in the midst of something difficult?  
How did that feel? What effect did that have?*

---

*Do you find forgiveness easy, or not? Why might that be?*

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*How do you pray? Have you tried to pray together?  
What is one way that you could do that, and when?*

---

*Do you sense that God is in this marriage with you?  
When have you felt that?*

## *Letter Two*

# Balance and Priorities

Dear Newlyweds,

Have you thought about the Christmas holidays? Whether they're just around the corner or several months away, the truth is that the holidays will be here before you know it. That said, you're probably looking forward to your first Christmas as a married couple. When the holidays finally draw near, you'll probably be wondering how to get everything done in time and how to begin your own traditions while still honoring the families you come from. Perhaps one family gathers on Christmas Eve and the other on Christmas Day. Or perhaps both families tend to have their gatherings on the same day—and what will you do then? Whatever the scenario, the question becomes: How do you honor your own needs as a married couple at Christmas, while still spending time with each of your families?

There are no easy answers to this question, but there are lots of creative possibilities. It helps to talk together first about what the two of you want. For example, is Midnight Mass important to you? Or do you prefer one of the earlier Christmas Eve Masses? At which church? When will you

have some special time just for the two of you, for your own “Christmasing”? And how will you work out the visits to each of your families? Before you get overwhelmed thinking about it, remember this: what you decide for this year can be different next year. Nothing is set in stone. (This will be even more important to remember once children are on the scene, trust me.) It will help to talk with each set of parents about what you think you can or can’t do. Most parents will be understanding about this and will be willing to make accommodations. And know this as well: there may be a bit of surrender for each of you, as you try to make a plan that works for the two of you and also honors the families you come from. So each of you might miss part of sweet and long-familiar rituals with your own family of origin, as you open yourselves to the creation of something new and just as wonderful. Be willing to give for the sake of love and for the greater good. There is always some sacrifice involved in real love. Remember O. Henry’s story “The Gift of the Magi”? Newlyweds Della and Jim each made a heartfelt sacrifice in order to give the other something for Christmas. What they gave and received from making that sacrifice for each other was even greater than the tangible gift each one worked so hard to give. (It’s a story worth reading, if you’ve never read it.)

This brings us to the ongoing challenge of trying to balance everything in general! As a married couple, how do you keep up with the demands of your jobs, the household chores, the bill paying, the shopping, etc., and still manage to carve out quality time for yourselves as a couple? It is quite a juggling act sometimes! But do try hard to make “couple time” a regular part of your life. Have dinner together as often as you can, and sit at a table where you can look at each other. Plan a date night every week or two. Carve out some regular unstructured time to just be in each other’s company. These practices will nourish

your relationship greatly. Little getaways, whether overnight or for a weekend, can also be life-giving for the relationship. My husband and I have built in these little getaways once or twice a year, and whether we're in the camper or at a hotel with a nice pool and hot tub, the change of scenery and the time to be with each other in a relaxed setting does us good.

It's also important that each of you have some individual time and space on a weekly basis. One of you may choose to get together with a friend, and the other may enjoy some quiet time for reading undisturbed. One spouse may want to go for a long bike ride while the other may want to watch several episodes of their favorite show on Netflix. We each recharge our batteries in different ways. Introverts may need this even more than extroverts, but the truth is, we all need it for our mental health. I might recharge by watching a baseball game, strolling leisurely through the Hallmark store, or sitting in the swing with a good book. My husband might recharge by taking his motorcycle for a long ride or by putting out in the garage for a few hours. We try to give each other space to do these things uninterrupted. And since we have different personal prayer styles, we try to give each other time and space for personal prayer as well, because we know how important that is. Honoring what the other needs for his or her overall health and well-being is part of loving one's partner well. And honoring one's own need for some individual time helps to bring a "whole self" to the relationship, a self that is centered, alive, growing, and interesting to the other.

Hopefully, you're finding some ways to honor your relationship with God as well. Long-time married couples attest to the power of shared faith as part of the glue that holds them together. Shared practices of faith matter! Making time for Sunday worship is a way of honoring God, being nourished by God's word and sacraments, and keeping you connected to