

# SIX JARS OF LOVE

LOVING ATTITUDES TO HELP  
MARRIED COUPLES RECONNECT

JOHN AND TERI BOSIO

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# Introduction

DURING THE YEARS OF MY PRACTICE AS A MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST, I (JOHN) MET MANY COUPLES WHO CAME TO ME COMPLAINING THAT THEY WERE GROWING DISTANT—DRIFTING APART. One couple in particular stands out as a typical example. Jim and Mary had been married seven years and were parents of two very active toddlers. They were also both working full time.

As they sat in my office I could tell that they were tired, stressed, and angry at each other. Mary felt overwhelmed, and Jim was bitter because he felt ignored by his wife and did not want to be in my office.

Mary complained: “Many evenings, after spending eight hours at work, I find myself coming home to cook dinner, fold the laundry, and play with our sons, Jack and Mike, or give them a bath and put them to bed. Meanwhile, Jim is either in the garage working on his favorite hobby, his car, or playing video games.”

Turning toward Jim, she said: “What about me? When do I get a break? I’m exhausted!”

Mary paused for a few seconds to compose herself and then continued: “I often wonder what’s happened to us. We still have the wedding pictures on our coffee table, yet we feel miles apart. How did we end up feeling so distant?”

Mary and Jim were suffering because they were mourning the intimate connection they once had with each other. They could still remember their wedding day very vividly, but the warmth of their relationship was slowly fading. They seldom saw smiles on each other's faces. All they felt was pain, frustration, and anger, and they could not give each other comfort. They felt lonely, and they were thinking: Is this all there is?

Jim and Mary are a normal couple. What they were facing was a crisis in their relationship—a crisis that is common to most spouses. Dr. William Doherty, a sociologist at the University of Minnesota and a marriage therapist, compares what happens to couples after they marry to what happens to someone who sets out on a voyage on the Mississippi River with a canoe. No matter how much love the spouses feel for each other, writes Dr. Doherty, if they do not intentionally paddle together to stay on course, they tend to drift apart emotionally. Life's river currents take them to places that they did not plan to visit, far away from their intended destination.

In *Take Back Your Marriage*,<sup>1</sup> Dr. Doherty explains that this drifting is something that all couples experience throughout their lives. We are all prone to becoming complacent in our relationship, and we tend to take each other for granted. We let our relationship go on autopilot and don't realize that we are slowly growing distant.

We asked couples we know in our community: How do you know when you are drifting? These are couples in stable marriages who were willing to share their journey with us. Here is what they said:

*Bill* I know we are drifting when I feel something is missing—like I'm missing my best friend.

*Beth* We have many little squabbles—nothing serious. We are short with each other for no special reason.

*Mark* When we find that we don't have anything to talk about, it tells me we are drifting.

*Barb* I think we're drifting when I catch myself thinking: It doesn't matter what he wants to do; I'm doing what I want.

*Gina* When Bob went back to school, it was a difficult time. That commitment took over a large part of our free time to be together.

*Bob* (agrees) Yes, I was very busy, and I felt isolated, and we disconnected.

The problem for most couples is that growing distant is so gradual that, unless we are aware of the possibility and are watchful, it is difficult to know that we are drifting apart. We may feel some discomfort, but we ignore it. We blame our busy schedules or our spouse. We feel the pain, and we carry on. We dive deeper into our work, or we turn our attention to the needs of our children, or distract ourselves with sports, hobbies, or friends on social media, or we busy ourselves with volunteer work, even church work. It is only after months or years that we realize that we are not where we want to be. We are becoming emotionally

disconnected. We do not know each other anymore. Our lives are moving on different tracks, in different directions.

Have you ever felt that you were drifting? How would you recognize that you are drifting? How do you reconnect?

Unfortunately there are some couples whose canoe is so far off course that they cannot find their way back. They do not think they have the energy to rebuild their relationship. Too much damage has been done. Some jump ship; others settle in an uncomfortable marriage, not knowing what to do. However, it does not have to be this way. Fortunately there are many more couples that, inspired by their faith and by what they believe about marriage, seek the help and guidance of a good book, or a couples' retreat, or the advice of a priest or a professional marriage therapist. Be one of these!

### **Pope Francis' Advice to Jim and Mary and to Us**

In his apostolic exhortation *The Joy of Love (Amoris Laetitia)* Pope Francis, as a caring pastor, gives couples like Jim and Mary, whom we met at the beginning of this book, and to all of us some helpful marriage advice. Here are some of his thoughts.

- Married life is a long journey and with the help of God's grace, you make progress by working on it one day at a time (n. 218).
- Remember that neither one of you is perfect, and each must set aside all illusions and accept the other as he or she actually is: a work in progress (n. 218).
- Married life is a process of growth, and each of you is an

instrument through which God helps the other mature. “The greatest mission of two people in love is to help one another become, respectively, more a man and more a woman” (n. 221).

- Hope is what helps you make progress on your journey together. Hope is the leaven that makes it possible for you to look beyond the present conflicts and arguments and see your current situation in a broader perspective (n. 219).
- Generosity and sacrifice are required throughout your marriage. At each stage of your life you need to sit down and renegotiate your agreements so that there are no winners and losers (n. 220).
- Learn to be present to each other. Make time for each other. Develop daily rituals, such as a morning kiss, an evening blessing, waiting at the door to welcome each other home, taking trips together, and sharing household chores; and it helps to break the routine with an occasional party (n. 225).
- Remember that “none of this is possible without praying to the Holy Spirit for an outpouring of his grace” (n. 164).
- “Love is always a gift from God” (n. 228).

These are great words of advice! Pope Francis writes that our hopes for the future give us a special motivation. Hope gives us a vision of what can be. It compels us to take control of our canoe



and reset the direction of our journey. We believe that this hope and motivation come from something deep in our heart; they come from the meaning we give to our voyage—the reason we got into the canoe.

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*“In the strongest marriages, husband and wife share a deep sense of meaning.”* ■ DR. JOHN GOTTMAN, PHD<sup>2</sup>

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### **The Importance of Meaning**

In order for couples to find the interior strength and energy to stay on course and to build their marriage, they need to be convinced that what they are doing is worthwhile and has a purpose—a meaning that is compelling. This is what gives them the hope and the courage to persist and to make the necessary adjustments and even sacrifices.

That day in my office, I asked Jim and Mary many questions: “Why did you get married? What were your dreams for your life? Are they still the same today? What do you want for your future?” I was trying to help them find in their heart the reason—the meaning—for being together that would give them the hope and the strength to make the changes they needed to reconnect.

Viktor Frankl, an Austrian psychiatrist and a Holocaust survivor, wrote in *Man’s Search for Meaning* about the importance of finding a purpose, a meaning. He writes that the meaning of life can be found in every moment of our life; even in suffering and death. This is what he learned while imprisoned at the Auschwitz concentration camp. He writes that those who found meaning in their life found the strength to endure and, for some, even to survive.

John Gottman, a psychologist who studied married couples extensively, wrote in *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*

that one of these principles is “shared meaning.” To be happy, spouses need to find a common reason for their relationship, one that transcends them, something that propels them forward on their voyage together and guides them when they get lost. Marriage is not just about sharing a home and raising kids. It is about something more. It is the pursuit of a vision of life that guides the spouses to build a life together, a life that has a purpose.

For Christian couples the meaning for their life together comes from their faith. In my conversation with Jim and Mary I heard them say: “We got married in the Church because we thought it would mean something to us. Right now, we do not know exactly what that is, except that we know God is with us.”

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*The sense that God is present in one’s marriage is a particularly powerful predictor of marital success among young married parents in America today.* ■ THE STATE OF OUR UNIONS, 2011<sup>3</sup>

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### **The Power of Faith**

Couples married in the Church face the same challenging passages and difficulties as all other couples. What is different for them is the presence in their life of a light that shines on their path and shows them the way in the face of obstacles. Pope Francis explains that we can see the beauty and attractiveness of marriage and family life when they are anchored in the love of God.<sup>4</sup> Our Catholic faith gives us a very clear map and compass for our canoe voyage and disposes us to receive the graces we need to overcome the obstacles we encounter. Our Christian faith helps us see that our marriage is not about us; it is a calling from God to serve him by being married, raising a family, and contributing to society. This calling gives meaning to our life.

On our wedding day, as baptized persons, we accepted a mission from God: to be icons of his love in our communities. We gave ourselves to each other completely and brought Christ with us in our canoe. Today, Christ is in our home; he is paddling our canoe with us and giving us the graces we need to steer our marriage in the right direction. With him as our companion, we let God chart our course and write our story.

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*“This is holiness: to let God write our history.”*

■ POPE FRANCIS<sup>5</sup>

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### **This Book: Six Jars of Love**

The goal of this book is to help you be aware of Christ’s presence in your canoe and to let him guide you and help you steer your vessel in the right direction.

*Six Jars of Love* is a book to be savored. Read it at your own pace. The chapters that follow were developed from presentations that we give at couples’ retreats for parishes and dioceses. You can read this book with other couples and support each other as you grow in your marriages. Or you can read it together with your spouse as a private spiritual retreat at home.

We want to stress that while it is best if you and your spouse read these chapters together, it is not necessary. If you read this book on your own, know that any improvement in attitude that one of you makes is bound to invite the other to respond in kind. Just as a negative interaction elicits a negative response, a positive one invites a positive response.

We suggest that you read a chapter at a time, and then for a few days pray and reflect on what you read, and practice what you learned. Let God’s grace prepare your heart while you give

the message of each chapter time to sink in, ferment, and make a difference in your life. Let it affect the behaviors and rituals through which you interact with your spouse and with your children. Create new habits—positive habits. Most of all, during this time, remember that Jesus is with you in your canoe. Pray for your marriage and for your spouse, and practice your faith. Scientists at the National Marriage Project<sup>6</sup> are finding that the practice of one's faith and the involvement in one's community are two important predictors of marital success.

As you read and reflect on the chapters of this book, make a commitment to attend Sunday Mass together regularly. When you participate in the Mass you bring your marriage to the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are present on the altar and in the assembly. In the Eucharist you encounter Jesus; you hear his word, eat his Body, and receive from him the graces you need to let love grow in your relationship. Pope Francis told his audience on December 13, 2017<sup>7</sup> that it is at Mass that we find our strength. He added that without the gift of the Eucharist we “are condemned to be dominated by the fatigue of everyday life.” This fatigue is what causes our marriage canoe to drift and go off course. The Eucharist can help you stay on track.

In addition, consider attending the social activities of your parish and meeting other couples; and if your time permits, volunteer to serve. Making friends with people who have similar values can be of great support to your marriage. Marriages do not grow in isolation.

We hope that through your prayers and through this book, you become more aware of Christ's presence in your life and you are able to keep your canoe on the right course. Let God write your story. As you do, you will become an icon of God's love, and

you and your spouse will experience in your relationship the joy of love. This is God's dream for you.<sup>8</sup>

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*“Christian spouses can make their marriage a journey to holiness.”* ■ **BENEDICT XVI OCTOBER 27, 2010**

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### **PRAYER**

It was because of Mary's intervention that, at the wedding at Cana, Jesus changed six jars of water into exquisite wine and helped a newly married couple avoid a terrible embarrassment. Mary and Jesus are great companions to have in your marriage. Through Mary you can ask Jesus to guide you and give you the graces you need as you progress on your journey.

At the end of each chapter we will ask you to pray the Hail Mary, the Memorare, which is a centuries-old Catholic prayer, and the Glory Be.

### **Hail Mary**

*Hail Mary, full of grace,  
the Lord is with you;  
blessed are you among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners  
now and at the hour of our death,  
Amen.*

**Memorare**

*Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,  
that never was it known  
that anyone who fled to your protection,  
implored your help or sought your intercession  
was left unaided.*

*Inspired by this confidence,  
we fly unto you, O Virgin of Virgins our mother;  
to you do we come, before you we stand,  
sinful and sorrowful;*

*O Mother of the Word Incarnate,  
despise not our petitions,  
but in your mercy hear and answer us.  
Amen.*

**Glory Be**

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,  
world without end.*

*Amen.*

**PERSONAL/COUPLE REFLECTION**

1. How is your marriage voyage progressing? Is your canoe moving in the right direction or is it drifting off course?
2. What are some of the currents that are pulling your canoe off course?

3. Pope Francis writes that hope is the source of strength in marriage. What are your hopes and dreams for your life?
4. What is your purpose as a couple—what gives meaning to your marriage?
5. Looking back, what led you to take this voyage together?
6. How do you practice your faith? What role does faith play in your marriage?

### **GROUP SHARING**

1. Based on your experience of marriage, is the metaphor of the canoe appropriate? Why?
2. What are the currents today that steer marriages away from their intended destination?
3. In your opinion, what is the destination?
4. Why is meaning important in life?
5. What are some of the red flags that tell couples they are going off course?
6. Do you agree that faith practice and community involvement are important? Why or why not?

## Chapter 1

# The Wedding at Cana

IN 2012 WE ATTENDED THE SEVENTH WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES, HELD IN MILAN, ITALY. Pope Benedict XVI was present, and he spoke to the thousands of people who had gathered. A young couple from Madagascar asked the pontiff for his grandfatherly advice about getting married. He replied by first affirming their feelings of love for each other. He said: “Falling in love is a wonderful thing,” and the crowd responded with thundering applause. Then, the pope added that feelings do not last forever. These loving sentiments will fade and for love to last it needs to become a conscious decision. What happens in all marriages is like what happened at the wedding of Cana, the Pope said: “The first wine is very fine: this is falling in love. But those feelings do not last until the end: a second wine has to come later, it has to ferment and grow, to mature...This ‘second wine’ is more wonderful still, it is better than the first wine.”

The wedding at Cana is a significant point of reference in our Catholic tradition. It reminds us of the goodness of marriage and the role that Jesus and Mary can play in the life of married couples.

Do you remember what happened at Cana? Below is the passage from the Gospel of John that describes the event. Read it slowly. Listen to each word, imagining that you are there.



**The Wedding at Cana** (*John 2:1–11*)

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” [And] Jesus said to her, “Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servers, “Do whatever he tells you.” Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, “Fill the jars with water.” So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, “Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.” So they took it. And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now.” Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

**A Disaster Avoided**

This is the story of a wedding disaster that was avoided thanks to the kindness of two guests. Wine was a beverage that was expected in abundance at a wedding. Had the feast run out of wine, the couple and the family would have faced a major embarrassment in their town. What saved their special day was the presence of Mary and Jesus and their intervention. They stepped forward to make up for the couple’s shortcoming, and Jesus turned six large jars of water into exquisite wine. That was quite a wedding gift.

This is the story of any marriage: of yours and ours. We all have shortcomings that cause our wine to run short from time to time, and this happens at all stages of marriage. In fact, even after forty-six years we continue to encounter moments that cause stress to our relationship.

It happened as I was planning to retire. Teri would justifiably ask: “What are you going to do when you retire?” I did not understand the significance of her question. “It is retirement; I do not want to plan what I am going to do. I may go for walks, take pictures, go on trips, etc.” Teri would reply with another fair question: “What will I do while you do that?” She was concerned about how this might impact her and change her routine. Instead, I resented her questions. I misunderstood her intentions. These exchanges caused tension in our relationship, and at a time when we should have been rejoicing, we were anxious because we were getting on each other’s nerves.

If you are a normal couple, you have certainly found yourself in situations that have taken the joy out of your relationship. For example, there may have been times when you experienced rejection from your spouse instead of acceptance. You felt ignored or lied to instead of being given the attention you wanted or the honesty you deserved. You may have suffered because of your spouse’s selfish acts, or you may have found it difficult to forgive and carried the burden of your resentment for too long. You may have felt alone in moments of pain when your spouse was not there to help you. Many of these difficulties were caused unintentionally, but others came out of selfishness. If you are suffering right now because of similar or other stressors in your relationship, resolve to ask Mary and Jesus to help you, like they helped the couple at Cana.

### **Running Out of Wine Is Natural**

Brent and Tina are good friends of ours, whom we have known for many years. They told us about an event that caused them a lot of pain. Brent and Tina were both missing their families and their hometown, which was several states away, and they had talked about moving back, but no decision had been made. One day, Brent came home and announced boldly: “We are going to move back home and I have already told my family in our hometown.” This took Tina by surprise. “What about me? Don’t I count? Why did you decide to tell your family before you told me?” This caused a deep wound. I am certain you understand why. This was a moment in their marriage when they were not on the same page. Tina was hurt.

Dr. John Gottman, a researcher who studied married couples for over forty years, writes that the brain is wired to remember bad things more than good ones and it takes five positive interactions to offset the damage done by a bad one.

In the story of Brent and Tina, one thoughtless action created a lot of pain and required much positive care over time to heal the wound. Several negative exchanges in a short time can cause our emotional bank account to quickly run in the red. Gottman advises couples to store up good feelings for each other so that when something negative happens it will take less effort to undo the damage.

Think about your own life experiences. How long does it take for you and your spouse to recover from a negative exchange that has caused hurt feelings? For us, depending on the level of hurt, it takes time, a lot of small favors, gentle words, and intentional positive behaviors to reset the course of our relationship. Think about the state of your emotional bank account. Do you, right

now, have a surplus of good feelings toward your spouse? Or is your balance running so low that anything negative, even small, can put you in a state of deficit?

### **How Do We Build Up a Surplus of Good Wine?**

Years ago, when I (John) was a practicing marriage therapist, couples came to my office asking for help. These were couples that realized they were running out of wine. As the therapist I felt like one of the servers at the wedding at Cana. My job was to help these hurting couples fill their empty jars, and like the waiters at Cana all I had to offer them was water.

I could not give them the second wine—the good wine that their hearts desired. The second wine requires a miracle: it requires Jesus' presence. Pope Francis tells us: "Love is a gift of God" (*Amoris Laetitia* [AL], 228). What all couples really want deep down is "supernatural love." They long to taste of the goodness of God in the love of one's beloved. But that love is not something we can create for ourselves. It requires God's grace. We need to let the Holy Spirit transform our life and our love. The Catechism reminds us that Christ gives us "the strength... to love one another with supernatural, tender and fruitful love" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], 1642). This is the exquisite wine we all desire.

To help my clients experience the taste of true love, I would teach them the skills they needed for getting along—that was the water for their jars. At the same time, I would encourage them to invite Jesus and Mary into their marriage to help them turn their water into exquisite wine. Only through Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit can we experience the true fruits of supernatural love: *joy, peace, and mercy*, as we learn from the

*Catechism* (CCC, 1829). These fruits give us the taste of the good wine that makes our heart smile.

**“Do whatever he tells you.”**

At the wedding at Cana, Mary said to the servers: “Do whatever he tells you.” To allow Jesus to turn our water into good wine, we need to do what he tells us. This requires faith. Benedict XVI and Pope Francis teach us that our Christian faith is not an ideology that we embrace; rather, it is an encounter with the person of Jesus who gives our life a new meaning.<sup>9</sup> Faith allows us to see our marriage from God’s perspective and to hear what Jesus is telling us. Faith disposes us to let the Holy Spirit transform our attitudes and conform our way of loving to Jesus’ way of loving. Faith gives meaning to all aspects of a couple’s life: the good times and the tough times. Pope Francis writes that moments of pain will be experienced in union with Christ, and moments of joy will be cherished as a sharing in Christ’s resurrection.<sup>10</sup> Faith also gives us the strength to resist the temptations that can destroy our marriage. Bill, a friend of ours, told us: “I travel a tremendous amount of time, and one thing that I do is to try to stay out of bars. I try to stay out of situations that can create temptations for me. And there are times when I turn to God and say: ‘Please help me because I cannot do it by myself!’”

Benedict XVI stressed the importance of faith in his homily at the opening of the Synod on Faith in 2012: “There is a clear link between the crisis in faith and the crisis in marriage.”<sup>11</sup> Social scientists agree with the pontiff. Researchers are finding that couples who practice their faith are less likely to have affairs or to divorce. Faith increases the chances that a couple will be happy.<sup>12</sup> In 2011 the National Marriage Project conducted a study about the marital

satisfaction of parents. They wrote: “couples who regularly attend a church, synagogue, or mosque together enjoy higher levels of marital success.” And they explained that a key factor in a couple’s success is their belief that God is present in their marriage.<sup>13</sup>

### **Jesus and Mary Are Present in Your Daily Life**

Do you know that during the good times and the difficult times, Jesus and Mary are present in your life even if you are not aware of them? On your wedding day you invited them to be with you on your journey, and they have come. Therefore, when you are stressed or encounter a conflict with your spouse, turn to them with confidence and ask for their help and guidance. You will not be disappointed. St. John Paul II said: “Jesus does not stand by and leave you alone to face the challenge. He is always with you to transform your weakness into strength.”<sup>14</sup> Mary and Jesus are ready to help you no matter the situation, even when you hit rock bottom.

Jerry is a joyful gentleman in his eighties. One day, as Teri and I were leaving church, he told us that he was celebrating a special anniversary. It was his thirty-fifth anniversary of sobriety. His wife had died recently, and she was very much on his mind because she helped him save their marriage. It was because of her and God’s grace that he was able to stop drinking. His addiction had become so bad that he would have blackouts and car accidents. One day his wife, Marilyn, told him: “You have to make a choice. It is either the bottle or me. What will it be?” He chose Marilyn and gave up the bottle. He added that he could not have done it without the help of God’s grace and the intercession of St. Jude.

At Cana, Jesus gave the newlywed couple not just the wine they needed to satisfy the immediate thirst of their guests, but the very best wine—a wine to be proud of, a wine the guests

remembered and probably talked about for some time after the wedding.

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*“The alliance of love between a man and a woman, an alliance for life, cannot be improvised, and is not made in a day.”*

■ POPE FRANCIS<sup>15</sup>

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### **The Six Jars**

The gospel story of the wedding at Cana mentions that there were six jars in the banquet room. We believe that each marriage has six jars, which with the help of Mary and Jesus can be filled with the good wine. We call these jars the “six jars of love.”

Each of these jars represents a key attitude without which a couple’s love cannot grow. In fact, without them it dies. Attitudes are mental stances we take toward another person. These attitudes affect the way we behave toward our spouse. Attitudes shape our habits.

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*“Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.”*

■ WINSTON CHURCHILL

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### **Attitudes**

Researchers are finding that between forty and forty-five percent of our daily interactions are driven by our habits, and our habits are shaped by our attitudes. One of John’s colleagues shared the following anecdote to illustrate how her attitude toward her husband was affecting a habit that was damaging their relationship. “The other day,” she said, “my husband wanted to make sure I answered his call so he borrowed my son Ed’s cell phone to call me. As I answered I was surprised to hear my husband’s voice,

but I was most surprised by his explanation. He said: ‘I used Ed’s phone because I wanted to hear your “caring” voice. I don’t get this “kind” tone when you know that I’m calling.’ Then, he said: ‘this kind and caring voice is normally reserved only for Ed and our dog.’”

“This incident and his comments,” continued the young mother, “left me feeling disturbed. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that he had a point. My poor attitude toward my husband leads me to express more care and affection to the dog and to our fourteen-year-old son.”

“At dinner that evening,” she continued, “we discussed the incident, and we admitted that we both could do better with our attitudes toward each other. We agreed to express our care and affection for each other more often. I said to my husband jokingly: ‘I promise that if you spend as much time with me as you spend with the dog, and if you pet me like you pet the dog, my voice will sound more caring and kind to you.’ We both laughed, understanding that in all of this there was a lesson to be learned”

Our attitudes shape our behaviors, which when repeated become habits.

### **Attitudes That Express Love**

The six jars of love contain six attitudes that express love: *Welcome, Faithfulness, Generosity, Forgiveness, Compassion, and Service.*

In my research, I (John) found that most psychologists and scholars link the presence of these attitudes to the stability of a marriage relationship and to the happiness of a couple. They all admit that the absence of even just one of these undermines the marriage and leads couples to feeling miserable. These attitudes represent qualities of love that are crucial to your marital



success. They help couples develop habits that keep them from drifting apart and stay on course on their journey, such as a good morning and a good night kiss, not interrupting while listening, telling the truth, holding hands, scheduling regular date nights, eating meals together, managing the interruptions from our digital gadgets, attending Mass weekly, asking forgiveness, expressing compassion and empathy, helping each other in our daily chores, remembering to say “please” and “thank you,” and many others.

In the coming chapters we will reflect on each of the loving attitudes that help us develop good habits and give us a taste of the love our heart longs for: welcome, faithfulness, generosity, forgiveness, compassion, and service. But first, in Chapter 2 you are invited to celebrate your love story.

Throughout the book we will keep in mind Pope Francis’s message that growing in love requires daily effort, and that such growth is not possible without praying to the Holy Spirit to transform our love (AL,164).

## **PRAYER**

*Mary and Jesus,  
special friends of the couple at Cana  
and honored guests in our marriage,  
we turn to you.*

*You helped a couple in their moment of need.  
Watch over us and help us  
when our wine runs short.*

*We yearn to fill our marriage with the good wine  
that God alone can give.*

*Help us change our attitudes  
and fill our life and our hearts  
with a love for each other that reflects imperfectly  
the immense love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.*

Together recite the Hail Mary, the Memorare, and the Glory Be (these prayers can be found on pages 10–11).

### **PERSONAL/COUPLE REFLECTION**

1. You and your spouse are like the couple at the wedding at Cana. How is your supply of wine holding up? Are your jars full or are you running short?
2. The authors identify six attitudes necessary for a healthy marriage: welcome, faithfulness, generosity, forgiveness, compassion, and service. Which of these do you think is a strength in your marriage, and which is in need of improvement?
3. When and how are you most aware of Mary and Jesus' presence in your life?
4. How do you pray? How are you most comfortable praying?

**GROUP SHARING**

1. Discuss the importance of the six attitudes identified in this chapter: welcome, faithfulness, generosity, forgiveness, compassion, and service. Can you relate these to your day-to-day life?
2. Why do you think these are important to your marriage relationship? What would a marriage that is missing one of these attitudes feel and look like?
3. We will explain each of these attitudes in the chapters to come. For now reflect on them, drawing from your experience. Consider each of them, and identify words or actions that you think show the presence of these attitudes in a marriage.
  - a. Welcome
  - b. Faithfulness
  - c. Generosity
  - d. Forgiveness
  - e. Compassion
  - f. Service

**PRACTICE**

During the coming week, pause from time to time and say a short prayer to Mary and Jesus asking for help with a jar that needs to be filled.