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Archdiocese of Vancouver



Brides, grooms, and guests with Archbishop Miller at the Mass Wedding on June 11th at St. Paul's

MORE THAN JUST A BLESSING

Of Mass Weddings and saying "I do"

by: Marie Pacheco

At the age of 70, a church wedding was the last thing Cora and Bernie Presto should have wanted. They've been married civilly and have been living as wife and husband for 10 years; both of them on their second marriage. Cora from Vancouver was divorced in 2000, while Bernie was a widow in the Philippines since 2007.

They were introduced by Cora's brother in the Philippines in 2008, spent time getting to know each other thru emails, phone calls and visits before they decided to get married. Since a divorce by itself does not allow one to get married in church again, following the precept in Matthew 19:6 - "*Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate*", they had a civil wedding in February of 2012.

Both devout Catholics, and active members of St. Mary, Vancouver, the past 10 years have been wanting for them since they knew they could not receive the Sacrament of Communion with their civil union not considered valid by the church.

"He is a member of Knights of Columbus, and for me I'm a strict Catholic. I needed a sense of inner satisfaction. I go to Church every Sunday, nangungumpisal, ako pero pag dating ng Communion, nawawala ako. I needed the sense of completion of my Sunday service," said Cora.

Having been officially married before and then later on divorced, Cora needed to go through a process of annulment of her previous union, before she could marry Bernie in the Church. It was not until early this year when her ex-husband

passed away that they were finally allowed to have their union regularized as part of 17 couples who participated in the mass wedding in the Archdiocese of Vancouver last June 12th.

“To have God with us all the time, pero mas ang spiritual yearning ko ay hindi kumpleto ang aking Catholicism ng walang Communion. Sa edad naming 70, hindi na namin naisip na magpapakasal ulit. Pero dahil nga sa aking yearnings para makumpleto spiritually, nagpakasal kami.”

‘After the confession, (the night before the wedding itself) feeling ko everything was lifted up. Hindi talaga kami nagkamali.’

Receiving the Body of Christ again after 10 years was a joy that Cora could not describe. They were the oldest couple who participated in the mass wedding officiated by no less than the Most Reverend J. Michael Miller, CSB, Archbishop of Vancouver. The



Bernie and Cora in a memorable pose after the wedding



Tony and Edith Alexandria with Archbishop Michael Miller

couple also intimated how they were happy not just for themselves but for the other couples who were with them as well.

“Learning they were civilly married too, maligaya kami to see they were drawn back to the Catholic Sacraments.”

And indeed, Tony and Edith Alejandria were among those blessed to be with them. Also married civilly for 26 years prior to joining the Church’s mass wedding, their love story began in the Middle East where Edith used to work for a hospital and Tony was with an engineering company. But despite being married for more than two decades already, the Couples for Christ members still felt the need receive the grace that comes with being married in the Church.

“Marriage is a Sacrament and as a member of Couples for Christ, we want our marriage to be sacred and to take place in sacred place where we can promise to be faithfully bonded forever.”

They add, it’s also part of being in a relationship with God and including Him in one’s marriage.

“If both of you love God, fear and obey Him, that means both of you would do your best to work on your relationship. Relationships which have God as their foundation, are those that stay strong despite many trials.”

Both Tony and Edith are proud and happy to have participated in the mass wedding ceremony. They also encourage other couples who are living together but are not married in church to keep it in mind.

Cora and Bernie say, if there’s any lesson they want to share, it’s the good old ‘age doesn’t matter’.

There is no timeline or deadline in going back to the sacraments and going deeper with your faith. All you need to say is “I Do.”