

30 Ways to Love a Lover



30 Ways to Love a Lover (best read from the bottom up, #1 to #30) is a very partial list of appreciations – appreciations of each other and appreciations of what’s made our marriage grow over the past 30 years. We both came up with about 30 musings, stories, poems, vignettes. There is no chronological order, dramatic arc, plot, or even common style to what we’re sharing. Nor is this a quick list of how to make another marriage work. If there’s one thing we’d like to encourage by sharing is that you explore what’s worked best for you and the most important relationship in your life.

With Love, Maurice & Jeff

April 10, 2020

#30 – Contribute to a Better World



Now that the two of us are moving beyond celebration of our 30 years together, and now that we've spent our celebration year remembering and appreciating the grace of those years, we look ahead and ask how we might give back. We write the last of our essays just as the Corona virus COVID-19 pandemic shatters life as we have known it. We are together and healthy and happy but in a turbulent and unsettling world. Our question is all the more urgent: how can we give back especially during this time of the plague? This final essay explores the question.

“Sheltering in place” is a mild phrase to describe what we really think is going on. More accurate is that God has sent everyone to their rooms and said “think about it!” We are to go to our rooms to be safer from COVID-19, to be sure, but the real reason is that we've been bad.

God is making that clear; and if you don't believe in God, then Mother Nature is making it clear, as are the animals passing us the virus, the forests destroyed for what we call development, the skies polluted by our fossil fuels, and the oceans full of our plastic bags and nuclear waste.

“Think about it!” Think about what you did wrong, God says. But, that's too hard! “What did I do to cause this pandemic? *They* did it: the Chinese, the World Health Organization, the Deep State, the Democrats... But not I.

“Think about it!” Go deeper than personal culpability, God says. What about the “we” and all the systems and structures that maintain us and that we maintain, mostly without thinking about them. These are social, political, economic, cultural structures that humans have built. How have these creations precipitated the COVID-19 pandemic, pollution of the environment, rapidly advancing climate change, nuclear waste, endless war, and the economic destruction of countries which in turn creates refugees. We together keep these systems going by feeding them with our taxes, our votes, our consumption, and our ignorance about how these systems work.

“Think about it!” doesn't mean dream about going back to normal. Normal, God says, is what got us here. Normal is the lack of public planning and preparation for epidemics; normal is fossil fuel driven societies that pollute the environment; normal is governments that work mainly to promote the greed of the few than the good of the many; normal is unequal and unjust political and economic systems; normal is support for the meat industry that pollutes the land and endangers human health; normal is education that produces corporate automatons rather than critical thinkers; normal is car and airplane travel that destroys the environment and blocks the development of public transportation; normal is excellent healthcare only for the few, lovely housing only for the few, and affordable education only for the few.

“Think about it!” Do we really want to go back to normal? Can we use our lockdown time to imagine alternative ways of living? Aren't there groups we can join to build a better society? How can we resist together the forces that maintain the normal systems? Can't we try to imagine how each family, couple, and individual can live differently and better after the lockdown? Perhaps we can consume less of what we really don't need, create vegetable gardens, drive cars less, fly less, spend

more quality time together, inform ourselves better, join socially responsible groups, read to inform ourselves, share and barter more with others, create friendly and cooperative community relations, resist the political and economic powers that maintain systems we don't want because they are not humane.

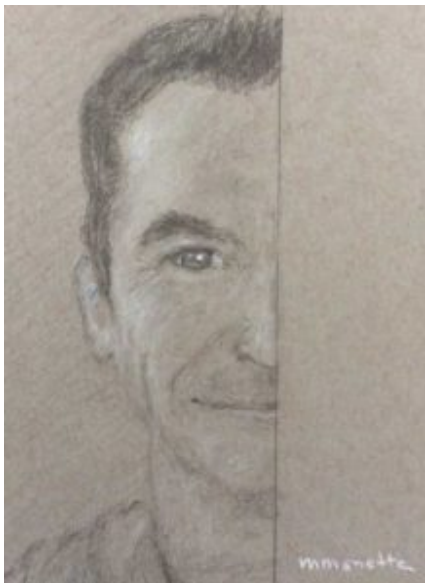
"Think about it!" How can I and we emerge from this lockdown committed to a society and world we really want for ourselves and for future generations? This pandemic is an incredible opportunity to create a new normal and to break apart the old normal that is destroying nature, community, and each of us individually. If we really pause and think about it, in less than just two months we've already proven individually and collectively we can not only change our obsolete world views for the betterment of all, but that we can actually change our lifestyles and consumption patterns almost overnight and invest trillions of dollars in previously unimaginable collective action. Never before has the entire globe changed so much, so fast and all at the same time. We've proven we can do it. If we really pause and think about it, we might do the same for the far greater threats to our very existence as a species: war and climate.

Many are fearful that if we don't take this opportunity to change, we might not be given another chance before greater destruction threatens us. Do we need another epidemic, or floods, fires, mercury filled oceans, darkened skies, or heat waves to teach us a lesson? Do we need more war and further destruction of cities and people?

God and Mother Nature are watching. Now is the moment of opportunity: Because now we suffer from the cruelty of the systems we've built. Because now we can see the clear skies over our car-free cities, the clear waters in our canals and lakes and oceans, and the empty streets that invite people to gather in community. Because now we see the many ways that people are helping each other through this crisis. We can taste the future normal, and so can the animals who now feel more at home in our midst.

"Think about it!"

#29 – Play 20



The following is the first in a series of essays I call "Play 20" — about learning, especially the challenge of learning for older people. Now that we are both retired, learning has brought to our marriage a new wave of creativity, excitement, and renewed appreciation for each other's gifts. Both of us have learning projects of our own. The following essay refers to mine (Maurice's). Jeff's learning includes playwriting, painting and gardening; he's finished two plays, he has a few of his paintings hanging on our walls and he's created our first-ever vegetable garden. Stay tuned to this page to read my "Play 20" series in coming weeks.



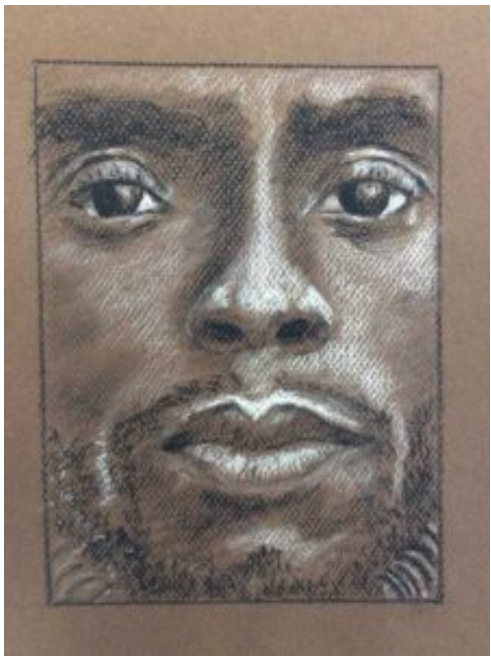
Play 20

I just turned 68, so why not play 20?

The idea to play 20 hit me when I reflected on the fact that many 20-year-olds become able to identify themselves as professionals of some sort by the time they reach 25. Julia is suddenly an engineer. David has become a nurse. So, with all my experience at 68, why can't I make myself the artist or writer I've actually dreamed of being? Why can't I begin to identify myself as an artist or and become a respectable one within five years?

The inspiration to play 20 moved me to learn creative writing. I turned to a writing coach who taught me the basics of the craft and I began writing stories. After composing about 100 one or two-page stories in about a year's time, I realized that I was creating a personal memoir. A year later, I self-published 80 of those stories as a book. Within two years I had become the creative writer I

had dreamed of being. People I didn't know would meet me on the street and say "you're the writer, aren't you?" At first, I hesitated identifying myself that way, being accustomed to identifying myself as executive coach, organizational consultant, technical writer, and university professor that I had been for most of my life. But, of course, "I am a writer." I write every day – and that makes me a writer!



Painting suddenly interested me and my husband. We turned to a coach who taught us the basics of painting with acrylics. That led me to teach myself drawing, with lessons on the Internet. Within a year, people were buying my work. I had become an artist!

So, why should becoming a writer or artist (or whatever you want to become) at 68 be any more impossible than at 20? Try it. I did and I want to support you to take on whatever new learning project catches your fancy.

Each essay describes a joy or challenge of my own journey and each is illustrated by samples of my drawings. Each also includes something important I learned about learning as an older adult, a lesson relevant to learning about anything. Go ahead. Play 20.

#28 – Nurture Walking-Distance Community (The Louise Lesson)



Couples, like close friends or close siblings, often communicate in code. A word like “blessed” or a gesture like a double cough can signal “please change the subject”, “you’re being too much of yourself,” “I wouldn’t have done it that way,” or “it’s time to leave.” For us, invoking the name “Louise” our dear departed friend reminds us of her spirit and one of the greatest lessons we learned early on in our marriage. We seem to invoke “Louise” more and more as we age.

Louise was one of our most worldly friends. As a journalist, she lived and worked in London and Rio, long enough in both places to meet a lover and have a child before moving to her next adventure. Fortunately for us, we met Louise shortly after we moved to San Francisco where she had “settled” for about 20 years. On Friday nights we’d play poker, always anticipating one of her hilariously crude jokes. At 73, one health crisis after another transformed Louise from a vibrant person walking 2-3 miles daily to someone who was frail and bed-bound for weeks at a time. We noticed Louise had few if any visitors other than us, and we felt bad that our work schedules and the fact that she lived way across town meant we could only visit once or twice a week. One afternoon we called Louise to confirm she was well enough for us to pick her up to go to the theater together. The coroner answered the phone.

Louise’s daughter and son flew in from London and Rio. They asked us to facilitate a celebration of Louise’s life. We told them we had never met any of Louise’s friends and didn’t know whether she had any, since Louise had more than once lamented having no visitors, at least during the previous year. They found her address book and began calling local names. Weren’t we surprised at the memorial! Twenty friends, all about Louise’s age, showed up, people from 10, 20, 30 miles away.

Like Louise, we’ve now been “settled” in our home for twenty years. But, unlike Louise, we have nurtured a walking distance community of friends and neighbors. We don’t do this just for the day

when we might be bed-bound and/or dependent on others; but we do it so that we can readily enjoy our community and can easily be there for friends and neighbors when they are in need.

So, when we utter the name “Louise” we are reminding ourselves of the lesson she taught us. “Louise” is code for us, a code of conduct: we need to nurture walking-distance community. Thank you, Louise.

#27 – Partner Big



The conversation suddenly took a turn, and so did my life. “I have something to tell you,” said my friend Jeff. “You’re the first. I’ve never told anyone. This might shock you. I’m gay.”

I’m glad I was seated. What shocked me was not the admission but Jeff’s transparency. I immediately fell in love with the beauty of his soul. I won’t describe my reaction with all the mystical language it deserves, but in short, this was the moment we were born as Jeff- and-Maurice.

Like other married couples, Jeff and I spent the first years together learning how to partner. We developed ways to give and receive love, make joint decisions, resolve conflicts, and understand our unique strengths and weaknesses.

To meet the challenges of getting jobs and settling into a home and becoming a couple, we developed a spiritual discipline we called “soul days.” Several times each year or on an as-needed basis, we would schedule short retreats to nurture our relationship. These quiet times helped us to plan, celebrate, avoid conflict, appreciate each other, and do all of this in a sacred space.

Our common spirituality sought community nourishment beyond traditional churches. Jeff didn’t belong to a church, and I could not find a local Catholic parish or community that interested us. The few times we went to a Catholic church, even the gay-friendly Holy Redeemer in San Francisco’s Castro neighborhood, we felt like second-class citizens. One Sunday, the bishop could not speak of gays outside the context of AIDS, and he was addressing a church full of gay people. He never addressed gay couples or gay identity. The gay priests hid their sexual orientation behind their collars, as I myself had unfortunately done.

We occasionally attended Glide Memorial Methodist Church in the Tenderloin District of San Francisco, a church that attracted diverse people with its social justice orientation and rollicking gospel choir. We appreciated Glide’s progressive politics and liberation theology and the excellent preaching of Cecil Williams that made gay people and other ostracized groups feel very much at home.

Jeff and I felt the need to connect more intimately with other spiritual seekers, so we assembled a small group that met each month. The group promoted social justice awareness and even supported a member who did time in jail for protesting torture training by the School of the Americas. Our gatherings sustained us for several years.

Even before that group dissolved, our dinner table became our main “church.” A wide variety of people would join us every week to bless our food with gratitude and appreciation, share table conversation focused on topics that matter, and deepen relationships.

Lover has become my favorite metaphor for describing my relationship to God. While I use other metaphors for God like Householder and Creator, Lover expresses a partnership and interdependence that other metaphors like Lord and Father never did.

Living has become for me an adventure in getting to “we.” Becoming a “we” with God is about actively participating as a member and heir of God’s Household, which is life in all its variety, seen and unseen. I choose to trust God and life itself as loving. I choose to believe in love, to hope in love, and to act lovingly, and when I fail, to admit it and realign myself.

A loving partnership with God, in my mind, involves bringing my whole self to relationships and work and fully exercising my basic human capacities to perceive clearly, understand deeply, discern justly, and act lovingly. Living with God is about operating in full capacity as a human being among and with other beings, rather than in isolation, and living life fully for the good of everyone in the Household.

Every day with my partner, Jeff, is a lesson on how to live in loving partnership with God and the universe.

(From *Confessions of a Gay Married Priest, Epilogue, 2013*)

#26 – Start Off the Day Right



As we awaken each morning and look ahead at our day, each of us engages in some form of meditation. We remind ourselves of what is fundamentally important — so very important and trustworthy that we want it to govern our being and doing throughout the day.

These two poems (written by Maurice) express what for us is fundamentally important. They answer these questions: What do we trust the most? To what do we entrust our day?

One Living Universe

The One Living Universe is perfect and loving.

With all that exists, I am one;

Unfolding in unison with direction and movement.

Ocean

Waves and ocean are one.

One balanced system.

Benefiting all within.

I am a wave, one with others.

I am ocean, nothing less.

I can relax, secure.

The tides direct me.

The ocean moves me.

The ocean, the waves, and I are inseparable.

#25 – Recreate More of the Best



Shortly after our 15th anniversary, around 2005 (now about half our married life together), we decided to Recreate More of Our Best. We were upset at that time that we did not seem to be making much of a difference in the world. After the September 11, 2001 attacks, the US had squandered the global good will to collaborate for peace. Then George Bush was re-elected President, even after it was proven his war with Iraq was based on lies. We decided to turn around the negative energy by asking ourselves, “what’s best about our life together up until now and what do we want more of in order to make a more generous contribution?”

For the next few months, we focused on that question. The list of answers was long. Two things stood out: more time together and more service to community. As a result, we decided to quit our jobs, both of which kept us apart most of the time and seemed more and more distant from serving

the community. We searched for “good work” and very quickly two philanthropic foundations offered us work which we could share and also do from anywhere. For the next 11 years we facilitated over 4 million dollars in grants to support conservation and health non-profits around the world. We also created lasting learning partnerships between Cuban and US community change-makers, resulting in the co-publication of a book: “Cultures of Participation at Work in Cuba and the US”. We spent the better half of the next 15 years living in Mexico, working half-time (sharing a full-time job), downsizing our space-needs twice (living part of five years in our remodeled garage) — and we were happier for it all.

For us, to “recreate more of the best” has a few key ingredients: First, “recreate” both in the sense of playing, but also in the sense of not starting from scratch. Look at what’s worked best, and recreate more, maybe in a different way. Second, start with “appreciative inquiry” (our thanks to mentor Diana Whitney), which is basically opening up the conversation with questions about what’s worked best and what do we want more of, thereby avoiding the traps of discussing unmet needs, what’s missing, problem-solving and/or fixing.

Our efforts at recreating more of the best have always deepened our appreciation of what we have, of what we don’t need, and of how journeying with more appreciation and less baggage is a boon to our marriage.

#24- Enjoy a Soul Day

From an early draft of Jeff’s play, *The Red Sweater*. Names have been changed to “protect the innocent”. 😊

ACT II – Scene 8

SETTING: A conference center.

AT RISE: Michel and Greg move to front center stage, stand and address the audience.



GREG: OK. So let’s see a show of hands for what the last hour or so has been all about for you. A show of hands for Forgiveness? Maybe Forgiveness of Others and Self? (pauses and scans the audience)

MICHEL: OK, a few of you. How about a show of hands for Faith? Changing Faith, Evolving Faith, Blind Faith? (pauses and scans the audience, nodding)

GREG: Interesting. How about a show of hands for Self-Awareness or Self-Acceptance? (pauses and scans audience). Hmmmm... very revealing. How about Intimacy or Love? (pauses and scans the audience). Great. So we can see there’s some diversity in the room.

MICHEL: Right. As we discussed before the break this morning, each couple came to agreement on a big theme for their first Soul Day. Everyone's back in the room so it's good to see nobody killed his or her spouse.

GREG: The first sign of a successful Soul Day.

MICHEL: Anyone sleepy? After lunch? How about we all stand up and stretch a second? Up, up, up. Just for a second. (Michel and Greg stand and encourage the audience to do so and then signal all to sit down.) OK.

GREG: All right. All right. So before you each talk about your Soul Day, Michel and I will share a bit about ours, mostly focusing on format.

MICHEL: Like we said, the focus changes for us each time, but today our Soul Day was about better communications.

GREG: Better what?

MICHEL (gives Greg the eye): We started up the street. Café Roma. Better communications has been on our minds, so we agreed pretty quickly. We've learned it doesn't matter really what we focus on, as long as we come to some agreement on something that's important for both of us.

GREG: We separated to write in our journals. Better communications. I went off with my soy latte to walk on campus, meditate some, and find a comfortable bench.

MICHEL: I stayed at the coffee shop with my *real* latte.

GREG: Rather than journaling about better communications, which implies communication problems, I found myself journaling about Michel's communication strengths. He's focused, precise, organized, clear. He's a great editor. I wrote down about twenty of his strengths.

MICHEL: The same for me. Greg's really a great communicator. I wrote about how his communications are creative, imaginative, understanding, and compassionate. He connects when he communicates.

GREG: We came back together after about two hours. Neither of us was surprised that we individually vetoed the subject of better communications.

MICHEL: What was sounding like what might be one of our first more negative Soul Days...

GREG: ... turned out to be the opposite.

MICHEL: We validated each other's communication strengths...

GREG: ... and how much we rely on the other's strengths.

MICHEL: I didn't feel the need to comment on what was nagging me earlier in the week.

GREG: Right. Even though we agreed we'd talk about "better communications", we fell back on a core practice or rule with Soul Days... staying appreciative.

MICHEL: Nothing's held us together for twenty years better than these Soul Days. For twenty years we've used the half-day mini-retreats four or five times a year, just by ourselves.

GREG: We clarify values, express appreciations, ask questions, vision, and plan — or better said, we set intentions.

MICHEL: Today's really been special...

GREG: We reaffirmed each other and our value of appreciation. We see how our bond is strong and we can overcome any obstacle to our communication... by focusing on our strengths.

MICHEL: To celebrate our Soul Day after today's workshop, we decided we'd treat each other to Indian food on Telegraph Avenue.

GREG: So now let's hear from you. Some couples already said your Soul Day was about Forgiveness, others said Faith, others Self-Awareness, others Love? Anything else?

MICHEL (responds to the audience): ... Finances. Good.

GREG: ... Death. Not easy.

MICHEL: ... Equality. Interesting.

GREG: ... God for me. Now that's a biggie. How about we start with you John and Tina? What were the highlights of your Soul Day? — God for me.

#23 – Open Up to Paradise ((From *Confessions of a Gay Married Priest, Paradise*)



My lover lives in Paradise.
He departed for Paradise a couple decades ago.

Now, he awakes each morning with a smile
and spends the day delighting in life's garden.
For him, there is no adversity that is not about learning,
no obstacle that is not an opportunity,
no moment that is not a joy.
Each person brings a twinkle to his eyes
and a sigh of gratitude and appreciation.

He departed from the ordinary world
when he and I turned our backs to falsity
and opened ourselves genuinely to the hereafter.
He brought me with him to Paradise.

#22 – Marry Into a Family



“They’re coming to dinner tonight,” said my sister.

“Who?” I asked.

“Mom and Dad,” she said.

“I invited them, and Dad agreed.”

“Are you sure? It’s been thirteen years of no coming to dinner when Jeff and I visit. I don’t believe it! Did you hear right?”

She nodded yes. Incredulous, I insisted she ask him in my presence. Within the hour, I watched her approach Dad in her deft manner honed by decades of dealing with stubbornness: “You and Mom are coming to dinner at six o’clock.”

His answer to her non-question and quasi- command: “Yes.”

Her follow-up: “I’ll be over to help you with Mom.”

If not for Dad, Mom may well have capitulated to dinner invitations long ago. Now at ninety-one and disoriented by a severe stroke, she simply followed Dad’s directions without objection. Over the years, Mom must have suffered deeply from the boycott that prevented her from seeing her son and his new friend. Perhaps her stroke finally softened Dad’s heart.

Their reaction to my initial coming out thirteen years ago had not dulled my resolve to visit them once a year. I knew Dad hadn’t meant it when he said, “You should kill yourself!” I did not want to walk out of his life. I simply stood up, looked at him and Mom, and walked out of their house without a word.

Mom pursued me into the street, up to my car. Dad watched from the front door as Mom embraced me and cried, “We love you. We love you. Don’t doubt that we love you!”

Within days, I telephoned to assure them that they would indeed see me again.

Once Jeff and I got settled in San Francisco, we arranged to travel back for yearly visits, which we carefully orchestrated. Jeff and I did not want exposure to untoward behavior on their part or to unloving outbursts on ours.

I would telephone to inform them we were coming to Lowell and ask if they were up for a visit. I would assure them we had a place to stay. They clearly indicated they wanted to see me, alone. I would give them a two-hour time slot when I would be available. That’s as much time as I thought I could comfortably be with them.

For the remainder of each visit, Jeff and I would spend time with friends and other relatives. Every one of the adults in the family accepted us with open arms, including my dad’s sisters, who were nuns, and my godmother Mimi, who would not mince words about my dad’s behavior.

I would extend the parental visitations beyond the two hours and even visit them for several two-hour periods if all went well. It usually did.

When I arrived at my parents' house, Dad would shake my hand but stiffly to avoid hugging, which had been our custom before the fallout. He would not ask questions about my life and would rely on Mom to keep conversations alive.

Year after year, the visits were cordial. I would see my parents alone. Jeff would wait at my sister's house next door. Occasionally, they would invite me for lunch, but I always said that Jeff was waiting next door and that they were welcome to join us. Every year, Dad would refuse with an excuse, like "We have our lunch already prepared."

My sister would also invite them to join us for dinner at her house but to no avail.

Thirteen years of cold shoulders, but tonight the ice would thaw. Jeff almost drove off the road when I called him with the news. Not only would he meet the parents, he would also get to grill salmon for them. A double test!

They arrived at six, as planned. Dad shook hands with Jeff. Mom just kept glancing at him. My sister and her partner and the boys acted as if everything were normal. The salmon was scrumptious. Knowing my dad's soft spot, Jeff even got him to play a game of cribbage.

For my part, I wondered if drugs had been slipped into my wine. I couldn't believe what was happening.

Mom broke my spell as she and I kissed good night. Popping out of her dementia for a magical instant, she smiled, pointed at Jeff, and whispered in my ear, "He's very cute!"

(From *Confessions of a Gay Married Priest, The Dinner*)

#21 – Break Bread with Friends (revised from "Letter to the Church", 1993)



We've found, in our partnership and our community of friends, a depth of God's grace we had never imagined possible. The two of us are publicly "married" and registered with the City of San Francisco as domestic partners. Over 100 people celebrated our wedding with us—many of them Church people, like you, some from no church at all.

As part of the ritual, we told them our stories—how we journeyed to this day through denial of our sexuality, hypocrisy, fear of

discovery, struggle for self-acceptance, and acceptance—and some rejection—by family and friends. We told them how we feel so graced by God to have been given each other and this community. We asked for their blessings on our union.

They spoke up with words from their hearts, even wishing us gifts that some of them had lost: faithfulness, permanence, good sex, ability to deal with conflict, joy and peace, and support from community.

We then broke bread and poured wine together as a community. We did so not as an official church but as people of many faiths and institutions—and people of no institutions—who want to care more deeply for each other as community.

We shared that this ritual for us has deep meaning and that the same ritual has meaning for other religions and peoples. We attempted to be inclusive in our reference to Jesus in the blessing over the bread and wine.

We told the assembly that we wanted very much to build with them a community of mutual sustenance and love. We then celebrated with the food and drinks that everyone brought.

#20 – Vow and Renew Vows (Washington Post, July 14, 2004)

A San Francisco Wedding for Jeff Jackson and Maurice Monette



On April 10th, Jeff Jackson and Maurice Monette celebrated 15 years of sacred marriage, 20 years of friendship and one month of legal marriage. Their lifetime commitment to each other and community was licensed as a legal marriage by the City and County of San Francisco on March 11th. Years ago, over 100 friends and members of their families joined them for their original wedding celebration.

The couple met in 1984 in Washington, D.C., while both worked at the Center of Concern, a Catholic social justice think-tank. They came-out to each other five years later when Maurice left 15 years of Catholic priesthood and Jeff moved back to the U.S. after two years of human rights work in Chile.

On March 11th, Maurice and Jeff recommitted to their original marriage vows before exchanging rings and receiving their State of California marriage license. 20 friends and family members joined them including family friend and former San Francisco County Supervisor, Leslie Katz, who officiated at the ceremony. They almost missed the unexpected window of opportunity to legalize their marriage since they were both working in Cuba when marriage equality began in San Francisco and upon returning were told there were no appointments available until late April. When friends indicated new appointment slots were opening, they took the earliest slot available and gave friends/family less than a 24-hour notice to join in the celebration. Within two hours of concluding

their ceremony, the California Supreme Court temporarily halted recognition of other same-sex marriages.

The inspiration for their marriage, then and now, are the following vows: *To love you as best I can and to accept your love as you give it. To live a simple and socially responsible life with you. To be myself, letting you know all of me you care to know. To build family and community with you. To continue searching and growing with you as our path to God and communion with all Life.*

(Originally published in the Marriage Announcements section of the Washington Post on July 14, 2004, the same day the US Senate rejected the President's request to change the US Constitution in order to prohibit gay marriage.)

#19 – Age Well (On our 24th anniversary of marriage, 4/10/14)



A Nouveau Beaujolais was he back then
Spring-fresh, light, bouquet easily aroused.

Aged now, he is more like Scotch

A double-malt Scotch,

Smooth but assertive, a bit tart,

A peerless partner on life's cold nights,

And a delight – with or without the rocks.

#18 – Ritualize Life

Religion has no monopoly on ritual. Ritual has been part of our marriage from the beginning and it has served our relationship in many ways. The following is a list of some of our rituals and what they've meant to us:

Marriage ceremony. We gathered our friends for a meal and the ceremony to express the nature of our commitment, commit to our vows and to request their support.

Blessings. Most meals in our home begin with a moment of thanksgiving and a toast to whatever or whoever we are grateful for. Rarely does an evening meal with guests not have a candle.

Morning coffee. This is a time to share the night's dreams and take a look at the day ahead.

Playing cards. We do this just before bed. It gives us an opportunity to review our day, talk about outstanding concerns, and even discuss our attitudes and reactions when these are reflected in how we play the game.



Soul days. Once every month, we go walking city and we separate to each journal about a particular topic or question that we've selected beforehand. We regather to share our reflections and then celebrate with a meal. These soul days have helped us to appreciate the best of our relationship, acknowledge growth, face spiritual concerns and social issues.

Special Days. Not a birthday, anniversary or Valentine's Day passes without some kind of marker for how special the day is and how special it is that we are together, often with friends and family.

New Year's meditation: Every January, we look back at the past year and examine what we appreciated most. Then we look ahead to the new year and we set intentions. This is not so much about planning as it is about clarifying values.

#17 – Focus on What's Important (Aggravated, Jeff's Journal, August 19, 2017)



Aggravated. Our tenant continues to push boundaries: doesn't pick up dog crap in the yard; let's dog out unsupervised; blasts music; let's girlfriend smoke on the property; etc. etc. etc.

Aggravated. There's a Saturday activity with a loudspeaker in the neighboring schoolyard. God forbid we have now lost our weekend peace and quiet. Sometimes I let little things like this pile up. Then I panic. We'll lose our property value! Worse, we'll lose our peace!

Aggravated. We just took our homeless friend Melvin to get a new cell phone. He was mugged Thursday night. He has a job interview on Tuesday, so we'll take him to get a haircut and shave on Monday or tomorrow. He also has a chance at a group home in Hayward. Fingers crossed he follows through with these two opportunities. We've learned to deal with his ups and downs along the way. We continue to pray for things to work out for him, especially when it comes to his temper. Things aggravate him easily.

Aggravated. What aggravated me the most while we walked the Camino to Compostela? Wow. Either I've forgotten or I have to think about this more. Aggravations were so small and not so important: a blister, a bad pillow, the screechy voice of the nun at the pilgrim's mass in Compostela. Small stuff.

Aggravated. My aggravations and the aggravations that Maurice and I experience as a couple pale in comparison to Melvin's. So, we regularly pray for friends and strangers who are truly suffering. Caring for others helps us to mindfully acknowledge and then let go of our own minor aggravations.

#16 – Be in Peace (Jeff's Journal Entry, August 6, 2017)



"Peace. It does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble or hard work. it means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart." Author unknown.

That's what's written in black on the white mug a work colleague gave me one birthday, when we were in the middle of intense labor-management negotiations back in 2001. It's been my favorite mug ever since; and every sip of water, tea or coffee offers the wise reminder.

A few days ago, I received a suicide text from our friend Melvin, a 33-year old homeless man who Maurice and I have decided to support as he tries to get himself off the street. I sat him down, reminded him of all the progress he's made, then drove him to his social worker in Berkeley. He's back on track. Tomorrow, he's got an appointment to get 12 teeth pulled in order to accommodate a

bridge for new front teeth. He's signed up for a job-skills baking class and the social worker found him a vacancy in a transitional home. He seemed motivated this morning. We will support his efforts to find his peace.

The fountain, the chimes, the geraniums, the love doves, and the warm morning fog offer me a sense of peace. My writing offers peace. Loving and being loved by Maurice offers me peace. Supporting Melvin offers both of us peace. Our neighborhood political action group offers us peace. Living simply offers us peace. My mug offers a constant reminder, to be in peace.

#15 – Meditate, Write, Apologize (Jeff's Writing Journal, April 27, 2017)

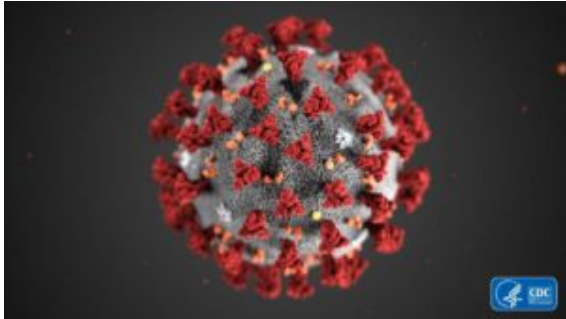


The bronze Walking Buddha statue on the fireplace mantel signals to me, "be present to life as it is." At this moment, I notice that the Buddha is not aligned with the window nor the living room portal. The Buddha is slightly off-center.

A slightly off-center Buddha reflects how I'm feeling right now – slightly off-center. I snapped at Maurice last night. Perhaps I misunderstood something he said about something, something so insignificant that now I can't even remember what it was. Where were you last night when I snapped at Maurice, all-present-Buddha, master of mindfulness and self-awareness? Yes, where – were – you?

Until now, I haven't written, not even journaled, for over a week. I haven't meditated either. What am I waiting for? The right moment? Inspiration? A sign? Yesterday was cloudy and rainy, so Maurice and I discussed some fix-up projects for the house. That's when I snapped. I might be off-center, like the Buddha, not because of anything major, but because I simply need to meditate, to write and now, to apologize.

#14 – Love in the Time of Corona (Whatever Comes, 2019)



Anything can come out of the blue. Meteors small and big have always hit the earth since its inception. Accidents, illness, tragedies hit couple relationships, as does death. Things happen that can change our lives in an instant. Surprises should not come as a surprise, but of course they do.

I am grateful that over the years, as we've been hit out of the blue, we have continued to thrive.

Cancers, heart attack, joblessness, lawsuit threat, family crises, death of friends and relatives, and many other meteors. Our love however has endured and grown stronger with each hit. We are one being, we are there for each other, confident in our love.

Likewise, we are confident in the Love of which we are part. No matter what, Love is there. This trust sustains our marriage.

#13 – Write Love Poems (To Jeff on His 43rd Birthday, 2013)



Nacido desnudo saltando del agua
Buscando siempre su paraíso fluvial
El niño chistoso compartiendo la vida
Casado conmigo, apasionado de ti
Buscamos juntos siempre la corriente
Divina y pura, llena de vida
Nadando, disfrutando cada recodo del río
Hasta entre nosotros y el agua no se
podría distinguir

#12 – Be There for Each Other (I Miss You, 2019)



I miss you. You've been away.
You said you miss me, too.
We've grown accustomed to each other –
the presence
of one who just IS THERE,
who loves me no matter what,
who sometimes is less there, as I am sometimes
less there to him;
but who always IS THERE,
with me – thank God!

How I would miss you if you were NOT THERE.
That can't be!
Yes, it can!

No, it can't – always will you BE THERE:
I've been loved, I am loved
and I have loved.
Love is,
Love lasts, and
Love hurts:
Alone we are, each one.
Yet not alone –
when we've been loved
we know love is there
and we hurt... to find it again.

But gone you are only temporarily,
you return tomorrow
and your presence will remind me now
of the sage words of a friend when his partner died:
"Love each other."
No time to waste.
BE THERE for each other,
for Love.

#11 – Make Valentine's Day Special (Unforgettable Valentine's, 2019)

Are you ready for Valentine's Day? This year do you want to do something special instead of the usual Hallmark card, dinner out, box of chocolates, or flowers? Here is an idea:

Make a homemade card for your loved one. Simply fold a sheet of paper in four. Inside the card, answer the following questions:



1. What do I appreciate most deeply about this special person? Your answer might include things that this person does well, what this person brings into your life, and/or the qualities that you most appreciate about this person.

2. “Who am I willing to be to help make our relationship extraordinary?” In other words, gift this person with your very best intentions. For instance: I am willing to be appreciative, open to you, honest with you, strong as we face challenges together, understanding, loving at all times...

This question may be difficult because you are aware that even if you want to be this way or that way with your loved one, you often fail. For this reason, you might phrase this second question not in terms of want but in terms of willingness: “Who am I willing to be to help make our relationship extraordinary?” Note the term “willing.” That term takes into account that you need help from your partner and from the universe to realize an extraordinary relationship. The term also indicates that you are willing to receive help and coaching. You know you will sometimes fail, but nevertheless you are fully willing to contribute to the success of your relationship.

I personally have begun a greeting card for my own husband of 28 years. This is the initial draft:

Here is what I most appreciate about you right now:

Your delight in being adventurous and opening doors that we can both walk through.
Your ability to make new friends for us both.
Your support of my writing and painting.
Your devotion to meditating.
Your openness to evaluating our decisions to be sure that they are as loving as possible.
Your willingness to forgive.

Here is who I am willing to be to help make our relationship extraordinary. I am willing to be...

- Appreciative of the wonderful person you are.
- Alert and responsive to your needs.
- Supportive of your writing and all your creativity.
- Flexible to reset or start over a conversation when I find myself arguing or closed.
- Compassionate and open to see things from your perspective.

Best wishes to you and your loved one for the very best Valentine’s Day ever!

*Previously posted in gaymarriedpriest.com

#10 – Follow for a Change (Distractions, 2013)



Oh!
That's what you...
Yes
Thank you for...
I had no idea...
Walking down the street together.
I in a straight line, passing buy closed doors, blind alleys, dead-end streets.
You, lost to seeming distractions, moments of dog sniffing that break the rhythm of my walk.
And you see the pursed lips, the snarl, the impatient steps in the same old, same old direction.
Oh!
That's what you saw!
Yes.
I like it.
Thank you! Thank you, thank you, thank you for distracting me.

#9 – Care for the Other's Care (Love in the Time of Illness, Journal Entry, 8/15/15)



Maurice, my love, I want to express in writing what has been more difficult to express verbally. I want to start with my reaction to your expression of love, hope and comfort when we learned a month ago at the Kaiser emergency room that I had had a heart attack.

It was late at night on July 14, maybe 11PM. Wendy, the easily distracted nurse who kept talking to herself so not to forget things, finally left us alone for a few minutes in the hospital room where I was to spend the night. We were both absorbing my "heart attack" diagnosis, still with a lot of unknowns. Together our minds were racing with questions: "Is there heart damage? Is there heart disease? Will surgery be needed for a by-pass or a stint? Were all 5 episodes each a separate heart attack? Can dehydration from stomach flu really cause a heart attack? Most importantly, will we see each other in the morning?"

You held my hand and started to stroke my hair gently and looked me right in the eyes and softly, yet clearly, said, "You know I love you very much, more than anything. I'm here for you and will always be here for you. Everything will be OK." You repeated, "I love you so much."

I've never doubted any of that over our 26 years together. Tears began to flow. "How can this be? At 52, this can't be our end", I thought. More tears with shortness of breath and chest constriction. My heart muscle began to feel like it does after a killer game of squash or tennis or a very long jog. Tired. Tight. Strained. "Oh no. Not another attack coming on", I worried.

"I know you love me and I love you, too. My chest is hurting. Please just tell me a story.

"There was a couple married many, many years...", you began.

I interrupted, "Actually, how about telling me about what you read on-line this morning about politics, on Truth Dig or AlterNet? Give me details. I need to get my mind off us right now. My chest hurts when I choke up."

It worked. You started to tell me something about a climate change story or about the corporate take over. I don't remember the story now, but I was able to calm down even though those stories often get my blood boiling. I felt bad about cutting off your expressions of love. I knew right away you understood so I didn't worry, until later that night.

Just before midnight we both knew it was best for you to get a good night sleep and that I was in good hands. We both said, "I love you". You went home and I began to rest on and off as nurse Wendy came in and out to check on something she seemed to have forgotten to check on twenty minutes earlier.

Your words came back to me on and off throughout the night. Your words comforted me as my fears grew and the question came back, "Will we see each other again?" Other questions came, along with tears. "Will you be OK? Will our friends take care of you? Will you have deep joy and love in your life?" I prayed to my loving God of creation and the answer seemed to be a strong "yes" to the collective questions.

I mostly thought of you during the night, your care, comfort, peace, joy and love – even with nurse Wendy's slightly comical and slightly worrisome interruptions and the discomfort of the IV and the heart monitors. I found myself hardly concerned about heart damage, heart disease, a heart operation, pain, discomfort, and a lifetime of medications and lifestyle changes. All I wanted was for you to be happy and at peace and full of joy and love. I found strength and courage and even the ability to fall asleep (a little) convincing myself "this too shall pass" and I will be home and healthy soon enough to take care of you and love you deeply. When doubts and fears surfaced, I reminded myself of our wonderful friends, family and community that surround us with love and are always here for us.

Like when I'm without you on a plane that hits turbulence, I reminded myself of the gifted life we have, the deep love we've shared for 26 years, the care that surrounds us, and how very lucky and privileged we are to have simplified our affairs over the past few years. I couldn't help but think of the mundane like our finances; I was comforted knowing you've learned how to manage our financial plan. All of that comforts me and allows me to believe you are already infused with a sustaining joy and love, so much so that it exudes to others.

I rested and, of course, you returned in the morning. My eyes were wet with tears of happiness we were together, not of fear, pain or sadness. Fear and sadness returned around 11 as I got wheeled away in the ambulance to San Francisco without you, but at least the ambulance nurse had a spunk to lighten things up and I got an occasional glimpse of the swarthy driver. More fear came around 6

when I got wheeled away and we were apart for the angiogram, especially when I mistakenly asked for Diana Krall love songs during the procedure. I thought of us when we first discovered her music earlier this year and then listened to it night and day on our veranda in Vallarta. I'm listening to those love songs now as I write this.

"Everything looks very clean with negligible damage", was a relief to hear from the cardiac surgeon. Others shook their heads when he asked, "Anyone else see anything?"

I could tell you were happy when I came back relatively early from the procedure, especially since we knew it would be fast if the heart and arteries were healthy and no stint or surgery were required. Your smile was comforting. I love your smile. I love you.

The sadness, fears and tears came back shortly after you went home to sleep later that night. Again, my greatest fear was whether you would be taken care of, with joy and love in your life. I cried thinking of you alone and lonely. Shift change was at midnight when a kind and caring nurse expressed concern about my having a red eye. Then she looked closely and said, "Both eyes are red. Do you feel ok?"

"I've been crying".

"Why?"

"I'm thinking of Maurice. It might be the meds. But, I just want him to be OK."

"He'll be OK. Don't worry. Just rest."

It's a month later. We're OK. We're home. We're healthy. We're happy. We're heading to Santa Fe next week for some high-altitude desert hiking. Thanks for loving me. I love you, forever.

Love, Jeff

#8 – Share Values (The Center of Concern, 2019)



Late in the summer of 1984 we met at a Jesuit social justice think tank in Washington DC called the Center of Concern. Maurice was working on liberation education; Jeff, on political change in Central America. Beyond work, we got to know each other by playing tennis, exercising at the gym, and hosting dinner for good friends. Our tenures at the Center only overlapped for three months, but kindled a lasting friendship based on common values.

Upon coming out of the closet to each other in 1989, we immediately recognized our potential for

more than a friendship. All those values we had shared (justice, peace, community, personal growth, political action, faith, and kindness) helped us build a lifelong marriage.

Thirty years later, we're still relying on those values to help us to grow and to see beyond the little things that matter less. We've found many ways to nurture those values:

- retreating for what we call "Soul Days" to appreciate life and set value-based intentions;
- when in conflict, pausing to affirm our values and hit the relationship reset button;
- making values-driven choices about where to work and how to enjoy our leisure time responsibly;
- meditating regularly, and frequently asking ourselves, "who am I willing to be today to make a greater contribution to the world?";
- participating in spiritual communities;
- balancing global social action with local caregiving for family, friends, and community;
- looking for ways to use our privilege and power to change systems based on greed and violence;
- updating our budget at least once a year, asking ourselves what is enough and what is just;
- giving time and funds to non-profits;
- orienting our art and writing to the nurture of a more loving, peaceful and just world; and,
- debriefing, at day's end over a very competitive game of cards, how we've lived the day.

Practices like those are just that, "practices." They remind us of the values we aspire to in our marriage. They help keep us on track when we are distracted. They help guide our choices.

#7 – Build on Differences (What Do you See? 9/19/19):

"You didn't marry your twin!"

Being deeply aware of that fact has been crucial to our relationship. The first years of marriage disabused us of the belief that we are ideal for each other because we think alike, perceive realities alike, and harbor the same needs and the same likes. Luckily, even at first, we were both knowledgeable about personality differences and we knew that we were two very different types, complementary in many ways but different.



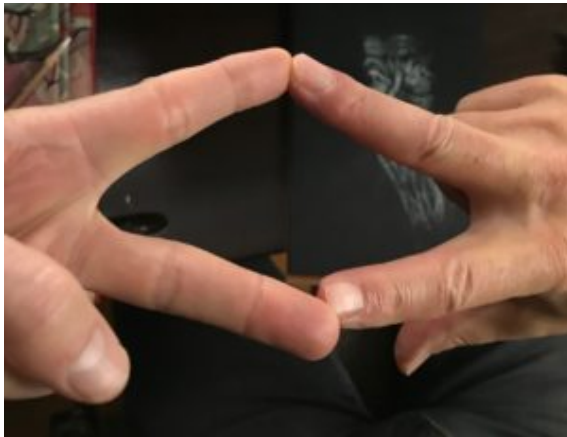
The psychological model we used and still do 30 years later is the Enneagram. It describes nine different personalities, each with its own basic need and focus of attention, direction of growth, direction of stagnation, and difficulties, as well as positive and negative characteristics.

There are so many instances when our awareness of personality differences has helped us cooperate and get along. Here are three:

- When we published a book, one of us focused on editing and getting the manuscript ready for the printer, while the other concentrated on publicity and on the final tone and look of the book. Two sets of skills each suited to one of our personalities.
- When, in one instance, we perceived difficulties in our communication as a couple, we took a retreat day and came to realize that each of us not only had a long list of very different communication strengths, but each of us communicated love very differently. We learned we're better off focusing on the other's communication strengths rather than on deficits and that we each needed to accept love **as it is given**, and not only **as I would give it**.
- When we've occasionally been locked in conflict, awareness of personality differences has created openings toward resolution. Just knowing about differences alerts us to the importance of calming down, reminding ourselves of our love for each other, and taking a hard look at each other's point of view. Oftentimes what has divided us is not disagreement, but perspective. If you're describing an elephant while looking at its backside and I'm describing the elephant while looking at its trunk, each of us is seeing something very different, but we each insist we are describing an elephant. Bringing our different perspectives together, we both get a more complete perspective on the beast.

After 30 years of marriage, neither of us is still asking *"do you still love me?"* Now, we frequently tell each other *"I love you as you are"* and we each know it to be so. We face our challenges and strive to make our contributions from our unique strengths, all the while appreciating each other's wonderful differences... even when we squabble.

#6 – Decide How To Decide (To Be or Not To Be Road-Kill, July, 2008)



The 5-hour drive between San Francisco, California and Ashland, Oregon gave us plenty of time to decide which paint colors to choose for each room in our newly purchased home. We failed to choose the colors, but we certainly emerged with something better.

At first try, we filled the car with a peacock of color suggestions. But, before long, a roadkill of colors littered the highway, along with the conversation stoppers that each of us contributed: "Chinese red should be the color in the bedroom." "I definitely want a blue-green somewhere." "Don't you like

peach? I do, why don't you?"

Each of us began to feel that we could neither safely contradict each other nor refuse each other's stated wishes or preferences. We found ourselves in debate over color choices, each defending his preferences.

The loggerhead did break. We remembered a decision-making model by leadership consultant Sam Kaner. We'd both been using the model in our work worlds for a number of years. The model suggests separating decision-making into two phases: the first for exploring the problem, and the second for narrowing-in on decisions. The reason for separating the two phases is that each phase requires a unique set of skills.

The first phase, defining the problem and opening possibilities, requires listening, understanding, defining the challenge, and surfacing as many options as possible. The second phase, deciding on which actions to take, requires selecting the best possible options, debating them, selecting criteria that will help narrow options, and finally settling on a decision. The first phase opens up conversation while the second phase closes it toward a decision. Imagine a diamond on its side, opening from a narrow point (definition of the problem) to its widest point (all the options), then closing to a narrow point (the decision).

We together noticed that we were mixing up the two phases. We had to ask “are we inquiring into the possibilities or are we debating toward a decision?” The first involves not judging, and the second involves judging which option or options is best. Some words don’t belong in the first phase of decision-making: words like should, I want, definitely, and why not.

Our confrontation had sucked the air out of the car. We took a rest stop and talked about how to use the decision-making model. This cleared the air and we proceeded to brainstorm color choices.

We have learned that, when facing decisions (especially those that are more important than selecting paint colors), we first determine whether we are brainstorming possibilities or determining choices. Our big surprise has been that we rarely need to debate options. Whenever we spend the necessary time on opening and exploring possibilities, we more quickly arrive at decisions, sometimes even before having to debate.

#5 – Deconstruct Walls (At The Berlin Wall, 7/29/2019):



Today we visited the Berlin Wall, at least what’s left of it near the Brandenburg Gate. It’s now an open canvass for artists. The wall was built in 1961 and destroyed in 1989. Those dates have more than a social significance for us. They have a very personal one as well.

Jeff was born soon after the wall was built; and he came out as a gay man just before it was destroyed. Maurice entered seminary just before 1961; and in 1989 he left the priesthood. Both of us lived those years behind walls. When the wall came down, so did our walls. We married in 1989.

We reflect today on how societies build walls. The President in the US is building a wall in order to keep out migrants. The state of Israel builds walls to keep out the Palestinians. The two Koreas are still separated. Individuals build walls: Jeff built a wall around himself fearful of his gayness and of society’s reactions; Maurice built a wall around himself so that he could pursue catholic priesthood and hide his budding awareness of being gay.

The Berlin Wall Memorial celebrates the historic fall of walls that destroy social fabric and stifle personal unfolding, walls that are built by politicians of all stripes and by even the most respected of social institutions. Today we celebrate the reunification of Germany after the wall came down.

Breaking free of our walls took great effort, ultimately leading to a better unification of our internal and external worlds and then the unification of our shared vision, values, and love.

#4 – Express Love (*Love in 3D*, 6/16/19):



Doubts, differences, and disagreements. The three D's inevitably show up in the early years of marriage, and in the latter years too! They certainly did for us, and what saved our happy marriage was three little words, "I love you."

Those words are important because, in those first years, romance is obliged to face reality. Reality intervenes in the form of questions, personality differences, conflicting preferences, strange assumptions, diverse processes for decision making or conflict management or simply expressing feelings and thoughts. This reality may raise important questions: "Is this the right person for me?" "Will we make it?" "Does he/she love me?" "Will he/she love me as I am with my doubts, differences, disagreements, and mistakes as well as imperfections?"

Because the three D's can be disappointing assaults on romance, we both found great solace in frequent and intense affirmation of the one solid foundation of our marriage: "I love you." Doubts, differences, and disagreements will inevitably arise. That's normal and to be expected. But, whatever, "I love you". Each of us is only human and every situation we encounter is limited in some way. But, through it all, "I love you."

#3 – Embrace Surprise (*The Light*, 4/4/16):

There was a light on in my house. I didn't remember leaving one on when I left earlier that evening. The front door was not locked. I always lock the door. I opened the door quietly and could see that the light came from the stairway to the bedroom. Am I being robbed?

The sound of footsteps on the stairs.



"Hi, love!" said the footsteps leaning over the banister. "What are you doing here?"

"Happy to see me? My plane is delayed until tomorrow night."

Happy to see him was an understatement. How could I not be happy to have an extra night with the person that just two days ago declared his love for me?

"How did you get in here?"

“The guest key. I forgot to return it to you.”

“That key is yours, Jeff, yours to keep, as is the key to my heart.”

#2 – Commit Again and Again (*Married Many Times, 2013*):

“I hear gay couples can marry now in California. Are you married?”



“Yes. We’ve been married six times.”

“To other guys or to women?”

“Actually, six times — to each other.”

We explain: “The first marriage in 1989 was a personal commitment to each other. We had been friends but closeted to each other for five years. Soon after opening up, we realized we were in love. Our Jesuit spiritual director helped us realize our sacred commitment defined us as married.

The second marriage was the wedding ceremony we held three years later with our community of 100 friends and family. We each explained our marriage commitment and values; then asked for their support.

We consider the third marriage, the first legal recognition of our lifelong commitment, to be our registration with the city of San Francisco as domestic partners.

We later registered as domestic partners with the State of California. That was the fourth marriage.

In time, the City of San Francisco declared that the exclusion of gays from marriage was unconstitutional and they began to marry gays. In the last hour before the State of California shut down the San Francisco licensing, we were officially married in City Hall. This, our fifth marriage, was annulled by the state supreme court a few months later.

Our sixth marriage was a legal marriage in 2008 performed by the State of California. But voters quickly stopped the state from performing future marriages for gays and lesbians. California nevertheless continued to consider those of us who did get married as still legally wed by the authority of the state. This created the anomaly that some California gays were legally married and others could not be.

Finally, we celebrated a seventh marriage in June, 2015 when the US federal government sanctioned marriage equality for all, as some other countries around the world had already done.

We’ve married and remarried each other seven times. We’ve never been indecisive about marrying, but society certainly has been.

This year, in 2019, we celebrate our 30th anniversary as a married couple. Many thanks to our families and friends, our City, our State, and our Country for supporting our love. We continue to yearn for the day when “the love that dare not speak its name” is recognized and supported in every corner of the world.

(From *Confessions of a Gay Married Priest*, 2013)

#1 – Appreciate & Celebrate (4/10/19):



“30 Ways to Love a Lover” is a very partial list of appreciations – appreciations of each other and appreciations of what’s made our marriage grow over the past 30 years. As we were planning to celebrate our 30th anniversary, we both noticed we were not in the party mode like we were when we celebrated 25 years of marriage. Yes we believe in celebrating, but perhaps in a different way this time. We decided to look back at our journals for writings that might reflect something about our core appreciations of the past 30 years. What’s worked best and how can we build on that? We both came up with about 30 musings, stories, poems, vignettes. Since they come from journaling, they’re not polished for publication. But some friends have encouraged us to share and so that’s what we’re doing here. Maybe down the road we might do some polishing, but for now, this is as rough, raw, and unedited as it gets. Every so often we’ll post a new appreciation. There is no chronological order, dramatic arch, plot, or even common style to what we’re sharing. Nor is this a quick list of how to make another marriage work.

If there’s one thing we’d like to encourage by sharing is that you explore what’s worked best for you and the most important relationship in your life.

With Love, Maurice & Jeff

April 10, 2019

Thanks to Wendy Appel for taking our favorite picture of us and to Dana Zed for recreating it as the playful cover sketch. Thanks to all those who love and are loved big; you’re our inspiration.