

## Magic moments

The domestic scene that met my eyes was tranquil indeed. On a stormy Sunday afternoon I had called in on friends, a couple with three young children. There on the living room floor, enjoying the warmth of the fireplace, the whole family was gathered around a game of cards. The two older children were enthralled by the game, their excited chatter punctuated by squeals of delight. The parents, too, were obviously enjoying themselves, juggling a fidgety toddler between them, they exchanged affectionate smiles and touches.

Cut to scene two. A week later I was invited to the 'house blessing' of another young family. The evening meal was hectic but happy (the only calamity a jug of cordial sent flying), the eldest child cared for the youngest, and a riotous game of backyard soccer scored more laughter than tears. In the blessing ceremony the children trailed around the house after their uncle-priest, intent on helping him sprinkle water and say the prayers. This was 'church' and these kids were loving it!

There. Two scenes of domestic bliss: marital unity, family joy, lived faith. Sound too good to be true? That's my point: They are true. They happened. I was there. I saw, I heard, I touched. These families are not from outer space, but planet Earth. These are not scenes from *The Brady Bunch* or homeware ads from the '50s. This is life today,

expressions of modern living as real as the existence of divorce and domestic violence.

I fear that, in society's current climate of social pessimism, we are being conditioned to believe that true love, marital fidelity, strong family ties and religious belief are but myths of the dark ages. How quick we are to sneer at the old television sitcoms about happy two parent homes. How keen we are to 'reassure' people that there is no such thing as 'the ideal family' (true) or the 'perfect marriage' (also true). Certainly, perfection is in the realm of the eternal life to come. Even so, the kingdom of God is already making its presence felt in our midst. Why shy away from affirming that? Lest our pessimism become self-fulfilling prophecy, today's Christian community must be bold, not just in proclaiming its ideals, but in acknowledging those who embody them with startling clarity.

Now I am not suggesting that 'domestic bliss' is a 24 hour experience or that we should sugarcoat life's troubles with glib denial. Nor am I ignoring the joyous gospel witness of single parent homes and the workings of grace amidst tragedy and pain. Whatever our story, God seeks to touch us in life's 'crucifixion' and 'resurrection' experiences, and for many people the latter includes marital passion, family unity, faith celebrations and just plain fun.

When we watch Magic Moment sporting highlights on TV, we revel in awesome displays of

athletic prowess. Why, then, do we react with embarrassed silence and cynicism to the 'magic moments' of marriage, family and parish life—sights far more common in everyday life than the feats of our sporting heroes? How vital for our young to see us savouring life's 'magic': flavours of contentment, faith, romance and sheer delight that tell us, not just what we can be, but who we are even now - an Easter people with an irrepressible 'alleluia' in our hearts.

I close with my own magic moment. Today I greeted my six year old godson with a high five and a 'Hey, how's my godson!?' He wrapped his arms around me and said, beaming, 'I'll be your godson forever!' Okay, so next time he might completely ignore me. But right now, in this fleeting instance, how precious that we should bask in the aura of our love for each other - even if for a moment. •

