

Don't hope. Decide!

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By Father George Agger SVD

When I lived in Ireland, I often would have to go to the airport to pick up a colleague or family member who was arriving. In those days, security was not the obstacle that it is today. While waiting for the passengers to exit, I enjoyed watching the people come out of the plane and be greeted by whoever was waiting for them. Some were businessmen, walking quickly with their briefcases, being met by a taxi or chauffeur. Others were holidaymakers, being welcomed home by their friends; others were visitors for the first time, looking lost and excited all at the same time.

So when I recently came across this story it immediately rang a bell and recalled memories for me—and it had a very important moral and lesson to teach us.

A man named Michael told of a scene at an airport that literally changed his life. He was picking up a friend. He noticed a man coming toward him carrying two light bags. The man stopped right next to Michael to greet his family. As the man set down his bags, he motioned to his youngest son who was about six years old. They hugged, and Michael heard the father say, "It's so good to see you, son. I missed you so much!" "Me, too, Dad," exclaimed the son. The oldest son who was about nine or ten was next. "You're already quite the young man. I love you very much, Zach!" Then he turned to the little girl who was perhaps one or one-and-a-half. He kissed her and held her close. He handed his daughter to his oldest son and declared, "I've saved the best for last." And he proceeded to give his wife a long, passionate kiss. "I love you so much," he said to his wife softly. Michael interrupted this idyllic scene to ask, "Wow! How long have you two been married?" "Been together 14 years total, married 12 of those," the man replied, as he gazed into his wife's face. "Well then, how long have you been away?" The man turned around and said, "Two whole days!" Michael was stunned. "I hope my marriage is still that passionate after 12 years." The man stopped smiling and said, "Don't hope, friend. Decide!"

And that's it, isn't it? For most married couples it comes down to a decision. "Till death us do part." It doesn't happen in every relationship, but that is still the ideal that Jesus gives us. I love to imagine how the quality of married life would improve on the Caribbean island of Montserrat where I minister today, in my Irish homeland and around the world if all couples made that decision today. Yes, a decision—not just a hope. May I suggest that you talk about this thought with your spouse? If you have replaced that important decision with a hope or conditions or promises, then maybe today is the day to renew that decision you made to love each other, in good times and bad, in sickness and health, all the days of your life.

In his 45 years+ as a priest, Father George Agger SVD has been celebrant for more than 100 weddings. At the time he wrote this article he was the only priest on the Caribbean island of Montserrat. Originally from Ireland, Father Agger served as a missionary in the Philippines and as provincial of the Irish and British Province before being assigned to the Caribbean.