



Parish Couple of the Month July 2021 Dan & Michelle Zadra

Philippians 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

This verse speaks of humility and service. I would say that Dan and Michelle Zadra go about their day serving the Lord with great love and humility - giving no thought of inconvenience or burden. Their day does not simply consist of 15 minutes of prayer and out the door, it is with every action, no matter how challenging or mundane, that they live out the *Ad majorem*; “all for the greater glory of God.”

Dan and Michelle were both raised Catholic and went through the religious education programs like many others. Dan's family very strict, going to Church every Sunday and Michelle's family more casual about their Catholic formation. But they both grew up with a Grandmother who set an example of how to be a devout Catholic.

It was at Western State College in Gunnison where the two of them met and after college, they were too broke to leave the area and found work in Gunnison. They had mutual friends, which brought them together and after seven years of dating, were finally married by Father Jim Koenigsfeld in St. Peter's Church. About this time is when they started volunteering for different ministries within the Church. Cleaning the tapestry (admiring the true meaning of artistry), environment, eucharistic ministry, lector, greeter, parish council - you name it, and that was not where their giving ends. Dan and Michelle are both involved in many other groups and activities within the community. Such as: Cattlemen's Days, Hunter Education, Lady Elks, Altar & Rosary and the list goes on. If there is something that needs to be done, you can count on them to be there to help. You see, that's the wonderful thing about Dan and Michelle; they serve with love and humility, they enjoy people, want to help, want to give. No one will ever know all they do - quietly in the background. Their service brings them closer to God and that is why they do it with such joy. For example, when they are alone together in Church, setting up the environment, in the evening hours after work, they share a quiet, quality time in the presence of the Lord. This is a blessing not just another task.

A few years back Father Andres led a pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Stations of the Cross in San Luis valley. As they climbed the hill, Father Andres reminded everyone that God is here, Jesus is here. The presence of the Lord was so strong, people were welting up with tears and for Dan, it made his hair on the back of his neck stand up, and the feeling of this holy presence just hit him, deep in his heart. A couple months after this event, Dan experienced, what he calls a “horse wreck.” This was not just a fall off a horse, he had broken his pelvis, along with

other injuries and nearly bled to death. As he was crawling and dragging himself to try to reach the road - he prayed and felt that same holy presence, which told him not to fear, it will be alright, and at that moment, Dan “knew what the hand of God felt like.” When he reached the road and was lying on the side - a car came upon him. This person was actually lost, (funny how God works) and they helped to get him emergency medical attention. It was a long recovery, but Dan is convinced had he not experienced the holy presence on that day in San Luis, he may not have survived this ordeal.

Michelle has felt this presence as well. Not just as they climbed the hill in San Luis, but while on a pilgrimage to Europe. Rome and Assisi just had a feeling of peace, these cities are not commercialized, there are no distractions; they are full of special, holy places, such as the St. Francis of Assisi Chapel and the cross of which Jesus talked to him, the Catechism of the Martyrs in Rome, and Padre Pio, lying in rest. Seeing Father Pio touched Michelle’s heart. Padre Pio was so humble yet had so many struggles. She thinks of his prayer often; “live quiet and be at peace with your bitterness...give yourself up into the arms of your heavenly Mother. She will take good care of your soul.”

I admire the trust and confidence they have in our Lord. Dan and Michelle both recognize they have had and will still have challenging times when they have to ask themselves, “what is happening?” but, they also know that if they have faith, even though it may take a while, things will be a lot better. During these challenging times, they find peace in being outside, no matter if they are walking or working, there is comfort in doing these things. With a quiet mind, praying the rosary as you work or taking time to glimpse at the beauty of God’s creation. They do these tasks all for the greater glory of God.

Dan is proud to be a part of the Catholic faith, he is in awe when thinking about how 12 people, 2000 years ago, built the first Church. Perhaps that is why St. Jude is one of his favorite Saints. He always appeared to get the bad end of the stick, because of his name, yet he was a friend of Jesus and seemed to have a lot of common sense. Dan can relate to this and often asks for St. Jude’s assistance with helping him to make decisions. St. Anne is another inspiration for both Dan and Michelle. She was Mary’s Mother and just as she was an example for Mary in faith, their Grandmothers did the same. These Saints are a source of help and guidance.

With age comes wisdom and if Michelle had the opportunity to talk to her younger self, she would tell her how lucky she is to be Catholic. “Anytime I need him – he is there. Jesus helps me” and the Eucharist is that “connection to God” along with the comfort of praying the rosary. These are all special treasures of the Catholic tradition.

Dan and Michelle’s faith and trust in God is remarkable. They share an understanding that when things happen, that we don’t understand, they know there is a reason for it and in the end, they know that you are better for it. This understanding didn’t just come overnight, it is the recognition of God working in your life that brings you to this understanding. Events that change you. Bad events that turn out to be blessings. Job changes, horse wrecks, and even COVID lockdown. Ever since the stay at home orders began, Dan and Michelle have managed to find time to sit down and have a meal together and pray together. They recognize the true beauty and blessings of being able to serve and celebrate being a Catholic.

Thank you Zadra family for all your humility and service.