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Eric F. Spina
University of Dayton, efspina@udayton.edu

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Three Weddings and a University

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Monday November 13, 2023

By Eric F. Spina

When Karen and I walked into a crowded Immaculate Conception Chapel for the wedding of Yasmin Espino '22 and Tre Whittaker '21 last month, I felt such happiness and pride.

This was a historic moment — the first wedding of a special couple who met in Flyer Promise, a program close to my heart because it's bringing high-achieving, underserved students to our campus to fulfill their dream of a college degree and a better life.

Yasmin and Tre came to UD in 2017 as first-generation college students from local Catholic high schools, part of the inaugural Flyer Promise class. They now have good professional jobs in Orlando, friends galore, and a marriage built to last. Flyer Promise gave them a world of opportunity, and they seized it — even if it took a few years for them to realize they had fallen in love along the way.

“When we met, it seems that everyone knew we would be together but us,” said Yasmin, now an industrial engineer for Nautique Boat Company. “ We danced around our feelings for each other. We went through so many changes, made amazing friends, and hung out almost everyday.

“Through every trial and tribulation, we remained best friends. I had resigned myself to the idea that all we were ever going to be were best friends until one fateful night in July of 2021 when Tre told me he loved me and our lives changed forever. ...I would never have predicted my life to go in this direction, but as we all know, God draws straight with crooked lines.”

In a span of three weeks this fall Karen and I had the immense joy of attending three young alumni weddings, two of them in the chapel. I couldn't help but notice the common threads that wove throughout each of the celebrations.

Each marriage began with a friendship that blossomed into love. Jacob Montgomery and Sabrina Jemail met in the Core Program in the interdisciplinary humanities learning-living community. Nathan Brown and Julia Harbach began dating after Julia took a position as a neighborhood fellow in the student neighborhood where Nathan lived. When Tre, Jacob and Nathan saw their brides walk down the aisle, all in the congregation witnessed the tears glistening in their eyes.

Each wedding brought together multiple generations of Flyers from across the years, including grandparents, parents, siblings, roommates and other recent graduates. It seemed as though all of Flyer Nation gathered to celebrate these couples, who are certainly beloved. The level of affection for them was off the charts, as is the knowledge that each couple is already contributing to the common good.

Each couple clearly has a relationship with God, a faith that is the bedrock of their relationship with each other. Every detail — from the carefully selected readings and liturgical music to their vows — honored their sacred bond.

Three wonderful sets of newlyweds: three weddings and the University of Dayton. This values-based University brought these three couples together. They are forever Flyers — and God's gift of love in action.