Homily for the Jessica and Daniel

June 1, 2013

An Episcopal priest was called to a nursing home to talk about the wedding plans of one of the residents. An anxious 92 year old man met him at the door. The priest sat down to counsel the elderly gentleman. He asked him several questions.

“Do you love her?” The gentleman replied: “I guess.”

“Is she a good Christian woman, the priest mused?” “I reckon but I am not sure.”

“Does she have lots of money?” “I doubt it—I really don’t think she has a penny.”

The priest was puzzled: “Then why on earth are you wanting to marry her?” The gentleman responded: “She can drive at night.”

Actions should always be preceded by reflection. The elderly gentleman was clear about why he was getting married. I will not put Jessica and Daniel on the spot—but let us be clear: people often get married for all the wrong reasons. People stay married because they find the right reasons. We are here today because we want Jessica and Daniel to have a good beginning in marriage. We want to reflect with them and share our hopes for their marriage. They have come to church to seek God’s blessing on their love.

Daniel and Jessica: let me offer four good hopes for your marriage.

1) Marriage embodies, incarnates the mystery of human love. It is a sacrament, what one writer has called the “savage sacrament.” Of late, there has been a lot of chatter about marriage and who should be allowed to marry. We may be chasing the wrong rabbits. Christian marriage is about love and love will always be a mystery. The poet Denise Levertow says about marriage: “Don’t lock me in wedlock, I want marriage, an encounter....” She goes on: “In marriage, I would be met and meet you—so, in a green airy space, not locked in.” So, our first hope for your marriage: May your marriage be an encounter in a “green, airy space.” May it be a sacrament of God’s grace in your lives.

2) Our second hope is this: may your marriage be a vocation—not an avocation, not a hobby. May it be a calling. God has called you into your marriage; your love is not an accident. The poet Levertow speaks of the “velvet and steel” of marriage. In the joy and in the ache of marriage, hope always for the calling of your marriage. In frailties and when strong, let your marriage call out the best you have to offer each other and the world of your life, your one precious life together. Yes, marriage is about romance, wine and roses. But honestly, marriage is more like working in the kitchen than sitting forever at a banquet table.

3) A third hope for your marriage: Be prepared to be surprised by God. Our God is a God of surprises. At the wedding at Cana in Galilee, the guests were surprised. Running out of wine must have been a humiliating moment. But Jesus takes water and turns it into wine—or was it fermented grape juice? Jesus saved the day—and the community was able to keep celebrating.
A third hope is this: *Keep Jesus Christ at the heart of your marriage—your vocation, your calling. Journey with Christ and with each other for all the days God will give you.*

4) Our fourth hope is simple—but it may be the most important. *May you both have many years of driving each other at night.*

Let us pray:

O Thou who gavest power to love  
That we might fix our hearts on Thee,  
Preparing us for joys above  
By that which here on earth we see.

Lord, grant Thy servants who implore  
Thy blessing on the hearts they blend,  
That from that union evermore  
New Joys may blossom to the end.

So may they hand in hand advance  
Along life’s path from troubles free;  
Brave to meet adverse circumstance  
Because their love points up to thee. (Creighton)

In the name of Jesus, we pray,  
Amen

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