

Of weddings, funerals and sacred moments

Within the last two weeks or so, in addition to the Sunday and weekday Masses, I have had the blessing of celebrating two weddings and two funerals.

Regarding the weddings, both were very beautiful in their own ways. The first was an “older” couple in their early fifties. The second was a young couple in their mid-twenties.

After the nuptial Masses, both had distinctive receptions. One was in a large, Spanish-styled classical home of a friend of the groom; the other was at a place called the “Historic Springfield Barn” in Williamsport, held last weekend during the nice cool-down of first fall weather.

A priest friend of mine asked me recently: “Do you go to the receptions?” I said “Yes!” – but not merely because of the food and the fun. It is obviously an honor to the couple and the family if the priest attends, but I also find the people I meet and the conversations shared to be “sacred moments.” I like to call them “moments of evangelization” – and, yet, also moments where I also learn a lot about people, humanity, hear very interesting “life stories” and meet some very unique people. (I met a family from Norway at the last one!)

If the priest does the wedding Mass and the homily well, hopefully making the wedding a bit personal in tone, it becomes a moment and time to “put a good face on the Church.” It is a good witness for the Church in these moments. Over the years, I have had many people tell me after a wedding – and sometimes after a funeral – that they have returned or will start coming to church, they are praying again, and they have a new relationship with God and Jesus in their lives. All glory, praise and thanks to God!

One of the great lessons I have learned over time is the message of Christ to his disciples who tried to prevent someone who was not in their “band” from using the name of Jesus to heal another [Mk. 9:38-48.]

Jesus taught them of the need to see that God can also work through the people they weren't familiar with and didn't always do things the way they would. That is a great lesson for us: not to impede the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, in our families, in our church and in the world by through our own "agendas" and by creating our own obstacles to his work.

May God help us to be open to the Holy Spirit, even if it is surprisingly coming through another person we may not feel is "qualified" or through a person we may not "like" or may not know. Through this may the Holy Spirit renew and refresh, revitalize and recreate.