

Wedding Homily: Clare Anderson and Corey Erff

I. Introduction

A. In his letter to the Philippians, St. Paul invites us to rejoice in the Lord and indeed we have gathered with great rejoicing to celebrate the wedding of Clare Anderson and Corey Erff. I greet you both in the Lord's Name even as I welcome your families and friends who are here to pray with you and for you as you begin your married life together.

B. Clare and Corey, you have known each other for a very long time, going back to your high school days in Madison, Connecticut and through the years your friendship and love for each other has grown. While you attended different universities and pursued different majors and careers, God's Providence brought you both to the Washington area. And last Holy Saturday, here in this Church of Saint Peter, you were received, Corey, into full communion with Catholic Church. You professed the faith, were anointed by the fullness of God's Holy Spirit, and received the Lord's Body and Blood in Holy Communion, thus entering more deeply in the Lord's Covenant of love with his Church.

II. Jeremiah 31:31-32; 33-34

A. Perhaps that is a good point of departure for reflecting on the Scripture readings which both of you chose for your wedding, beginning with the prophet Jeremiah. God sent him in trying times to bear witness to his Covenant of love with his people, and the times were indeed most difficult in the land of Judah. Its kings, unfaithful to God, ignored his Word and thus made hapless decisions, causing innocent people to die and many others to be herded off into exile. Jeremiah was sent to remind the people that, even in these dire circumstances, they were still chosen and loved by God—so much so in fact, that God's Covenant with his People was very much like a marriage. Even if many in the land of Judah had given up on their marriage to God God was not about to give up on his marriage to his People, his Covenant of love.

Through Jeremiah God promised them a New Covenant that would not be broken because this time it would be written, not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts.

B. Clare and Corey, today you are entering into a covenant of love that is meant to be inviolable, unbreakable, “until death do you part”. Yet, as you know, the vocation of marriage faces many social and political pressures, not to mention the personal challenges which so many couples experience. And so your marriage needs to reflect something of God’s own determination to make his marriage to his People work, to make his Covenant endure. This will demand of you not an embattled fidelity but a joyful fidelity, just as Jeremiah held out for the people of his times a new and a radiant vision of love. And you can make such a daring commitment even in times like these because God has written his Covenant of love upon your hearts, sacramentally. He did this on the day of your Baptism when the life of the Risen Lord entered your souls, on the day of your Confirmation when you were sealed by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and on any day you worthily receive the Lord’s Body and Blood in the Eucharist. I invite you today to ask the Spirit of the Lord once again to write upon your hearts, to inscribe upon them an undying love for one another so strong and so beautiful that it will reflect God’s own undying love for his People, through thick and thin!

III. John 2:1-11

A. The Gospel passage, the wedding feast at Cana, picks up where Jeremiah left off. It draws us into the situation of a newly married couple who ran out of wine during their wedding feast. At Mary’s urging, Jesus enters into this distressing human situation and makes of it a sign that he would fulfill Jeremiah’s prophecy to bring about a New Covenant, a new and final “marriage” between God and his People. For a moment, let’s look in on this couple, their names lost to history, to find out what truly happened at their wedding celebration.

B. First, we learn about the guest list for wedding feast in Cana. This couple invited Jesus, the Mother of Jesus, and the Apostles to their wedding. It turns out, that was a really good decision. Today, unfortunately, many people leave Jesus, his Mother off the guest list because they view marriage as a purely secular celebration devoid of faith. Clare and Corey, you have put the Lord Jesus, his Mother, and his Apostles at

the very top of your guest list and that bodes well for the future of your marriage.

C. A second point is that, by accepting that couple's invitation, Jesus affirmed the natural goodness of the institution of marriage. He affirmed that marriage between a man and a woman is in accord with God's plan and for all time he made marriage a visible and powerful sign of God's complete and decisive love for his People, the Church— a sign that is also key to understanding ourselves and our dignity as human persons. Clare and Corey you are here not merely for a civil marriage in a beautiful church, but indeed to receive the Sacrament of Marriage in which your love for each other becomes a visible and powerful sign of Christ the Bridegroom's love for his Bride, the Church, — a permanent bond of love by which you are prepared to bring children into the world and to form them according to the ways of faith, discipleship, and self-giving love in a home that can rightly be called a domestic church.

D. Third, let's re-visit the role of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, in the wedding at Cana. It was Mary who interceded for this couple, just as she continues to pray for all of us. Yet Mary was not merely asking Jesus to remedy their lack of wine. No, faithful to God's Word, she sensed that the time had come for God's New Covenant with his people to be revealed. In obedience to the loving plan of the Father, she asked her Son to reveal his glory, to offer a sign that the Messiah had at last appeared in human history. With the confidence of a perfect faith, Mary instructs the waiters, "Do whatever he tells you." Clare and Corey, Mary stands ready to pray for you in all that lies ahead but she will also ask of you a complete and ready obedience like her own to all that the Lord will ask of you in the fulfillment of your vocation and as your response to the New Covenant established by Christ. Again and again, Mary will say to you, "Do whatever he tells you!"

E. Notice also that Jesus transformed an abundance of water into wine and that the wine which Jesus created was of the very best vintage. Jesus did this as a powerful sign of his Father's overflowing love. Not only is the Father's love for us utterly generous, but it is indeed the best, the purest, the most satisfying of all loves. This is the love that would be revealed fully as Jesus gave his life for us on the Cross. It is the love that is reenacted at every Mass wherein wine is changed into the Blood that Jesus shed for us to seal the New Covenant promised by the prophet Jeremiah, blood

shed for us and for many for the forgiveness of sins (cf. Lk 22:10). Clare and Corey, the Eucharist is the living source of that rich and abundant love which alone fully satisfies your hearts' desire while strengthening your love for one another. Here is found that love in which you will reconcile your differences, that love which will make your home a fount of overflowing charity, especially for the poor, the sick, and the vulnerable.

IV. Conclusion: Philippians 4:4-9

A. Finally, Clare and Corey, let's ask St. Paul to teach us all what your response should be to this marriage covenant. In effect, Paul instructs you today and always to rejoice and to have no anxiety. Of course, not even St. Paul can compel you to be happy and not to worry. So, when Paul urges you to rejoice and to have no anxiety he is assuming that you have already fallen in love with each other and with the Lord; and that you gratefully trust in the nearness of the Lord's mercy and compassion, so much so, that you can ask him for whatever you need. St. Paul assumes you are disciples who will seek first the Kingdom of God and every authentic good worthy of your humanity - rather than grasping for possessions and pleasures that leads to unhappiness and anxiety.

B. Authentic joy and freedom from worry are not artificial emotions. No, joy and freedom well up in hearts on which God has inscribed his Covenant of love, hearts that rejoice each day that love has found them, hearts that show their gratitude to God by continual acts of kindness for others. With your families and friends, I pray for you, Clare and Corey, that your hearts may always be as one in showing all of us the way to that peace of God which surpasses all understanding... and may the Lord bless you and keep you always in his love!