

A Sermon for the Wedding of Gandy Garcia and Peter Drahos Wedding  
Saturday, September 18, 2010  
Isaiah 61:10, 11; Colossians 3:12-17; John 15:9-12

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen,” St. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans.

Gandy and Peter, I know you'd really like to have sunshine today, but you know what, we really don't need it, because your faces are filled with the rays of faith, hope and love. “. . . Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

Seeing the two of you standing here with us, dressed so beautifully and handsomely, reminds me of the story of a pastor who was asked to talk with a Sunday school class about marriage. “Boys and girls,” he began, “I'm here this morning to talk with you about marriage. But, before I begin, I want to know, can any one tell me what Jesus had to say about marriage?” And, after a moment or two, one of the little boys raised his hand eagerly. “Peter,” asked the pastor, “What do you think Jesus had to say about marriage?” “Well,” the little boy answered, “I'm pretty sure it was Jesus who said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’”

I suppose that's true for all of us on our wedding days. None of us really knows what's happening when we get married. But then, we don't really need to know what's happening because marriage, we confess, is an act of faith. “And faith is the assurance of things hoped for.”

We are people of faith. Marriage is an act of faith. Now, this is not to say that marriage is a gamble (you know where this is leading, don't you?), as one could just possibly infer from the place where you will celebrate your wedding reception this evening. You surely didn't think I could pass that one up! Well, good luck to those who are not on the dance floor, and good luck to those who are on the dance floor! (I know of a bride who unfortunately had to have some very serious dental work done on the night of her wedding because of a slick dance floor.)

Let me say it again, marriage is an act of faith, “and faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” It has been said that we do not make the marriage, it is not your love that makes the marriage, but the marriage that makes us, if we will allow it. We come here purposely to the church, not just because it's a pretty place with a long aisle and beautiful stain-glass. We come here to the church in an act of faith, believing that God, who made you, Gandy and Peter, is also making your marriage, and that he will protect it from every danger that may threaten it from within and without. This is God's doing, we confess, not yours, and not ours.

There is great assurance in this. There is nothing more important in life that you will do than to be married and, if you are so blessed, to bear and raise children. I dare say, nothing more important, more God-pleasing than this. As our home-birth physician, Mayer Eisenstein, said to us years ago when we were having babies, “Dennis and Jane, you're fulfilling the First Commandment in the Bible, “Be fruitful and multiply.”

It is a blessed thing to approach your marriage with the knowledge that this is God's doing, and that no power on earth, no temptation, no human frailty can dissolve what God holds together. So, in a few minutes, we can confidently say: “What God has joined together, let no one put asunder.” And you can soon say to each other with complete and confident assurance: We can never lose each other; by the will of God we belong to each other till death.

Gandy and Peter, you have come here today, along with your parents and your families, your best friends and your relatives, some people you've known all your lives and others you're meeting for the first time. And you've come here with the Church, the generations of the faithful who have gone before us and those who will come after us: your grandparents, and great-grandparents, and all the forebearers of the faith. Your children, and your grandchildren, and all who will come after them. You have come here, I suppose, with maybe just a ting of fear and trembling, you have come here to take a leap of faith. But you have not come here alone. Marriage is not something you will do by yourselves. You come here together with women and men, husbands and wives of generations past who have taken leaps of faith into a future that was unseen, uncertain, unknown to them. And it wasn't any easier for your grandparents than it will be for you. Learn something about them, listen to the stories about them, let their faith sustain you.

You have also come here with us. I hope that's reassuring to you. And Gandy, I surely hope you know what you're marrying into with Peter's family. You may be glad to know that we're not here to give you the nudge over the cliff, or to wish you “bon voyage,” “good luck,” and, by the way, “Have a nice life!”

No, we've come here, together with you, to take this leap of faith, remembering that it was by faith that our ancestors Abraham and Sarah, in their old age, "obeyed when they were called to set out for a place that they were to receive. . ." We do so willingly, confidently, joyfully around good food and drink, glad music and dancing.

A few minutes ago, I asked these people here with you whether or not they were prepared to take this leap of faith with you. I have no doubt that they're ready to get on to Indiana for the good food and drink, the glad music and dancing, the sooner the better, but I wonder if they're ready to make good on their promises.

I asked them if they would promise "to support and care for you in your life together, to sustain and pray for you in times of trouble, to give thanks with you in times of joy, to honor the bonds of your covenant, and to affirm the love of God reflected in your lives." And you heard them. And I heard them. They said, "We will, with the help of God." You know what? I think we should hold them to it, because two people can't do marriage alone, as we clearly see in our broken-hearted society. A big "send off" today just doesn't cut it. We need to leap and to travel together. And, we do so, coming here, and leaving here, with hope.

A rabbinic saying reminds us that "without food we can live for days, but without hope, we cannot live an hour." I like to think that we try to make our weddings so perfect because we know that marriage is filled with so much IM-perfection, and we need to have the hope that rests in the joy of the wedding day. You and your parents have gone to great lengths to make this day one for you and all of us to remember. And we thank you! You will need to come back to this moment, time and again, when the days and nights of marriage are long!

I hope today is for you like those fairytales that we learned a long time ago where the very next line after the wedding was always, "And they lived happily ever after." Because we love you, this is what we want for the two of you, that you will live happily, joyfully and faithfully ever after. With a smattering of fatherly, motherly wisdom, St. Paul urges us "to clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. . ."

One of my favorite sayings about courtship and marriage encourages us to "keep our eyes wide open before marriage; and half shut afterward." From now on, Peter and Gandy, don't let the little things, "the speck in the other's eye," as Jesus calls it, keep you from seeing the love you have for the other because of "the log in your own eye," as he puts it. As Danish proverb says: "A deaf husband and a blind wife are always a happy couple."

"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you," Jesus tells his family on the night of his leap of faith, "abide in my love . . . This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." Don't allow your work rule in your hearts. Don't allow money to rule in your hearts. Don't let the self rule in your hearts. Don't insist on your rights. Don't blame each other. Don't judge or condemn each other. Accept each other as you are, and forgive each other every day from the bottom of your hearts. In a word, live together in the forgiveness of your sins, for without forgiveness no marriage can survive.

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." And, if you are so blessed, as we pray with the psalmist, "may your children be like olive shoots around your table." I'll leave you with that thought in mind.

Now, "the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."