

Wedding of
Peter Schaefer ~ Carol Byrne

Homily Given by Rev. Mr. Peter B. Swan

May 30, 2015 – 11:00AM

(Sirach 26: 1-4, 13-16); (Ephesians 5: 2a, 21-33); (Mark 10:6-9)

“They are no longer two, therefore, but one body...”

We are gathered here today to wish Peter and Carol great and lasting happiness and to pray for their future happiness. We make this wish as we share in the joy they feel in their hearts. The readings that Peter and Carol picked for this happy occasion all speak about love.

How can we know we have found that right partner? In other times and places, people married for more practical reasons, but today, most of us want to marry our “soul mate”. Sirach’s vision is not quite as romantic as soul mates that fall in love at first sight and know they will always be together in blissful tranquility. But, if we choose people of good character to marry, perhaps, like the husband in the passage we just read from Sirach in our first reading, we will be grateful to have by our side a really good person, a partner whose faithful presence can indeed be as “the sun rising in the Lord’s heaven”. We pray that Peter and Carol will be that rising sun to each other.

In our second reading from St. Paul to the Ephesians, we read about the connection between husband and wife, and God with His Church; the connection we are referring to in both cases is none other than Christ himself. By joining our lives together in Christ, your relationship and your marriage also become a sign of the unity of heaven and earth and of the unending love of God for all creation.

St. Mark’s Gospel comes to the very heart of what happens in marriage – those who were once two individuals become one. They do not cease to be individuals; the qualities and gifts of Peter and Carol that brought them together will always be there. But something new has been brought into the world; a new oneness; the unity of a loving couple – a married couple. There is in this life no higher degree of unity than that found in a married couple, and that oneness is the most perfect reflection that can be found in the unity that exists between God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. No wonder Jesus said, “... what God has joined together, no human being must separate.”

Marriage in the Catholic Church is a sacrament. Today, Peter and Carol have come on their own free will to ask the Catholic Church for the Sacrament of Marriage. You, their friends and relatives, are asked to be witnesses to their love and to be present as they come before our Heavenly Father in this great sanctuary to make a solemn vow before God – to profess and renew their love for each other “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health”, for all the days of their lives. They have eagerly awaited and prepared for this day and have come here with confidence, after much careful consideration, because it is not just any word they are giving to each other, but, as I said, ‘**a solemn vow before God**’. In other words, it is a covenant between the two of them and God who now becomes the third party in this holy union. As witnesses to this happy occasion, as witnesses to this solemn vow, we are now charged to ensure that Peter and Carol live up to their promise to each other and to our Heavenly Father. This is our task; this must be our commitment to them.

And now Peter and Carol, I would like to speak to you directly. I don’t need to tell you that today marks a complete, new beginning in your lives. Today, you both go back to school again – the school of marriage, the school of love. Today, you begin to learn again – to learn to love each other in a deeper and spiritual way. As you continue your lives together, so must you also continue loving each other, sharing your lives with each other, taking each other into consideration always, getting rid of all selfishness from your lives because there is no room for selfishness in marriage. If selfishness is not rooted out or creeps in later on, it will surely cause problems. Marriage is indeed a school of love. This

is a happy moment for you and for all of us here to witness this occasion. Let the love that you have for each other continue to grow. And in order for your love to grow, you must continue to practice:

Openness: To be open to your spouse demands a willingness to let the other see exactly who you are. Think of yourself as a rose. Only when the petals are open to its fullest can you see and enjoy the real beauty of the rose. Yes, when the petals are open, you can also see the flaws of the rose. But it is these flaws, amidst the beauty, that make the rose a unique and beautiful flower. We must learn to accept and live with those flaws. If the bud does not open, it will not become a beautiful rose. In its openness, the bud changes. By *your* openness, you too will change as you become what you are meant to be to each other.

Dialogue: This is the essential, two-way conversation in marriage where you speak and listen with your hearts. This conversation must not be limited to words, but must include other methods of communication, such as a loving glance or the affection of a gentle touch. As in all things worthwhile, dialogue must be worked at. You make it happen by beginning with trust and persevering in hope.

Think the Best: By thinking the best of the other in every situation, you are on the road to remaining in the love of the other and also in the love of Christ. This does not mean that facts and feelings have to be denied; it *does* mean, however, that you avoid hasty conclusions, holding grudges, and refusing to listen with your heart.

Peter and Carol, I cannot think of what other advice I can give you. You two have seen it all... have lived it all. But Peter, I *do* want to say this to you – and it comes with a warning. My advice to you is, “Treat the Lady right at all times...” – and here is the warning – “...because if you don’t, they will *never* forget.” Permit me to relate a true incident that happened many years ago.

It was in the early seventies...a young private in the United States Army was in a public amusement park in his Army uniform. His beautiful bride was by his side. The young Private was as proud as a peacock because he was wearing the uniform of the United States Army and he had his lovely bride at his side. The young wife reached for her husband’s hand and something unimaginable happened. The young soldier pulled his hand away and remarked, “Sorry honey, but I am in uniform.”

Forty plus years later, that young Private is now wearing a uniform of a different kind...that of a Roman Catholic Clergy (a Deacon). One Sunday morning, they drive to church, park the car, and the husband opens the door for his wife. As they are walking across the parking lot, the husband reaches out to hold his wife’s hand. She gently pulls her hand away and remarks, “Sorry honey, YOU are in uniform.” As I said, “They never forget.” Please continue to hold each other’s hand and show the world that you are in love. The world needs to see, our younger generation needs to see, that love still exists in our world. With all the hate and the crime around us, we must show the world that love prevails. We must set the example. Hold hands at all times.

By being married, by giving yourselves to one another, by saying “yes” in the presence of Christ and this assembly, you two have become one – and by becoming one, you have created a life of Peace and Harmony. Throughout your long life together, may your home breathe peace, and spread peace to those around it, especially to people who are often hostile towards one another and are torn apart in strife. Peter and Carol, my friends, today you begin a new chapter in your lives. Continue to hold hands and walk together with the peace of Christ. I wish you both years of continued love for each other. I wish you the very best. I wish you God’s Peace and Everything Nice.