

Marriage homily for Chelsea and Chas

Several years ago an advertisement for a company selling diamonds, Debeers, turned up frequently on our television screens. The images are unforgettable. It shows an elderly couple walking hand in hand down a tree-lined country road. By their smiles it is obvious that they are in good spirits.. Walking a short distance behind them is a vivacious young couple apparently in love with each other. Clearly they are captivated by the sight of the elderly couple still in love after many years of marriage. After they pass the couple moving at a snail's pace due to advanced age, the young woman turns around and once more shows her delight. No doubt she hopes that in the winter of her life she and the man she loves at the present time may grow old together as a married couple.

I also wish to note that the music playing in the background is from old rock and roll standard, "Stand by me" by the recording artist Ben E. King

The voice you hear in the commercial says, "There are two things in the world that last longer than time: love is one of them, a diamond is forever".

What today's three readings have in common is that marriage is seen as a gift from God. In addition, they each express a beautiful understanding of Marriage as a partnership.

The prayer of Tobiah and Sarah on their wedding night is that God bless their marriage. Indeed, in the Book of Tobit every major turning point is punctuated with a prayer. And most moving, is the petition that they grow old together.

"Call down your mercy on me and on her, and allow us to live together to a happy old age".

Even saint Paul, in his letter to the Christian community at Corinth, speaks of love without end.

"There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure.

Only recently, I was introduced by one of my parishioners to a song recorded by the popular country-western artist, Mary Chapin Carpenter, "Grow Old with Me". The inspiration for the song was a poem penned by the nineteenth century poet, Robert Barrett Browning, called "Rabbi Ben Ezra".

The words of the song dovetail nicely with the sentiments of Tobia:

Grow old with me

The best is yet to be

When our time has come we will be as one

God bless our love

God bless our love

Grow old with me

Two branches of one tree

Face the setting sun

When the day is done


God bless our love

God bless our love”.

Chas and Chelsea, to grow old together is a divine gift, a wonderful blessing. But always keep in mind that it takes three to get married: you, your beloved and Christ, the bridegroom of the church, his bride.

As you grow older and face the many challenges life affords you will come to recognize how often you need to lean on each other for support and comfort.

As strange as it must seem to you, I have witnessed the truth of the need of mutual support in the most difficult of circumstances in the most unlikely of places: a patient’s room in a hospital, where at one time I served as a chaplain. There are seldom more beautiful expressions of love than a wife holding the hand of her gravely ill husband. Growing old together often means maturing in love.

Before I conclude my homily, I must point out that the elderly couple in the  commercial I mentioned earlier did not remind me of my sister and her husband.

I do wish to be invited to the reception.

God has called you to a life-long partnership. As the influence of the church and her teachings continues to diminish in our secular culture, marriage in Christ represents a formidable challenge for any young couple. But always remember that God, in his providence, did not bring you together if he could not fail to see the good in both of you.

You are beloved of God.

May you live to see your children’s children, amen