

I've known Boomer nearly half my life and nearly all of his. He was a kid that everybody at church knew. He had a great smile and a joyful charisma that made you want to be his friend. Like all kids, he gave us days of joy and frustration. As he grew up, he really did advance in wisdom, age and grace, to use the words the bible applies to the young Jesus of Nazareth. I shouldn't be stunned, but I am, that he found Cora, a person beautiful inside and out, to be his partner for life. I am proud of both of them and consider it a great privilege as I'm sure you do to witness this marriage today.

In the Catholic tradition we like to celebrate weddings at mass. As the eucharist is a sign of the covenant that God made with us in Christ, so marriage is a covenant between two people in Christ. During the eucharistic prayer we ask the Holy Spirit to consecrate the bread and wine, changing them into the body and blood of Christ. Then after the Lord's Prayer comes the nuptial blessing: we ask the Holy Spirit to "consecrate" the bride and groom, changing them into a sign of Christ among us.

Today's gospel comes from the Last Supper, which we commemorate at every eucharist. Jesus is giving final advice to his disciples, as parents may do before their kids go off on their own. This is what Jesus said - four simple words: "Remain in my love." He implies that the disciples were at that moment in his love. They had no idea what was coming the next day, the tragic crucifixion of their Lord and Savior. He would face those terrors on the strength of love for his disciples.

"Remain in my love" also implies that difficulties lay ahead. The disciples will be tempted not to remain in his love, but he wants them there. The one thing they have to do, he says, is keep his commandments. All of us know that the times we feel most distant from God's love are the times we do not follow his commandments. It's true of human love. When we do not follow the promises we have made, it is hard to remain in love. Jesus says if we keep at it, if we keep loving, our joy will be complete.

Everybody knows what joy and love feel like, but not everybody gets to experience the joy that comes from remaining in love in spite of difficulties. Parents know that special joy when, after many years, they see their children grow up, become responsible, make good choices, and start a family on their own. Good friends experience special joy when they stick with each other especially through times of failure. Spouses who remain in love 25, 50, 60 years experience a joy the rest of us can only imagine.

The Catholic Church sees this link between our faith in God and our faith in marriage. God never abandons us; even if we have not been as faithful as we should, we can always come back to that friendship. Boomer and Cora, you begin a new life today as a couple and in Christ. You know what love is; it can be something even more. Jesus says this about disciples who practice the virtue of love: "I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete."