

Nick McCormick & Julie Schmittgens

Falling in love is easy. Organizing a wedding is hard. I congratulate both families for your perseverance, and all of you for sacrificing your time to be here today as witnesses to the commitment that Nick and Julie make to each other and to all of us. This day comes about because you all worked together as a community. You sacrificed together out of charity. You took time to be understanding.

Nick and Julie have walked paths that have led them through schools such as Mizzou and St. Louis University. They have gone job hunting, house hunting, and helicopter flying. They have discovered that falling in love is easy but organizing life together is hard. Even now, on a day when they establish a foundation for their future, they are still pulling together the pieces of their professional life to prepare responsibly for the road ahead. They enter this marriage with faith in God and trust in divine providence.

I was especially struck with the second reading Nick and Julie chose for their wedding, a little-known passage near the end of St. Paul's Letter to the Romans. Paul is fielding a variety of concerns that that community brought to his attention. One concern appears to be getting along with one another. Some Roman Christians were annoyed by the inadequacies of others. Other people just wanted to please themselves and didn't really care about others. Paul accordingly offered some advice. Everyone knows we should be loving toward everyone else, so that advice is not new, but Paul frames his argument in a new way: He holds up the example of Jesus Christ. "Christ did not please himself," Paul wrote. When you think of this, Jesus did not work miracles for his own comfort, but to benefit others. He spent time with people who were sinners. He endured the misjudgments of his enemies and the ignorance of his own disciples. He was the Son of God; he could have done things a different way. He didn't. He chose not to please himself, but to please others. Because of this example, Paul writes, "We ought to put up with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves; let each of us please our neighbor for the good, for building up." And in a command directed at their life at home, Paul wrote to these Romans, "Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you."

Now, Paul addressed these words to every Christian in that community, but we hear them today at a wedding with a very specific application to Nick and Julie. If you two are like most other couples, you will encounter days when your partner seems not as appealing as they do today. Remember then what Paul says: "We ought to put up with... failings." That especially applies to married life. Furthermore, a family by its nature is a place of welcome. You experienced in your own families the welcome that your parents gave when you were growing up. Christ welcomed you into the world; you then should welcome others.

In a society that prizes traits such as individuality, self-promotion, and disregard for the opinions of others, these ancient words of St. Paul today call each of us to the same virtues you exhibited to get ready for this day: community, charity and understanding. Nick and Julie you begin your married life today on the strong foundation of Jesus Christ. May he always be a welcome guest in your home, as you are in his.

Saturday, August 4, 2018