

## Jessie Yeagle & Christine Baehr

When I sit down in my office for the first time with an engaged couple, I go through a list of my questions before I ask for theirs. Mine include things like where you're from, where you work, how you met, how you expressed your faith growing up - that sort of thing. I add another question just for the fun of it: How did the proposal take place? I love hearing engagement stories. Some are wildly elaborate schemes; others are spontaneously private. But with Jessie and Christine, I did not have to ask about their engagement story because I was part of it. I knew the date, time and place of the proposal before Christine did. Jessie proposed here in front of the cathedral, and I had arranged for him to bring Christine inside to pray before the Blessed Sacrament - just the two of them and the eucharistic presence of Jesus Christ.

As you can imagine, not every couple does it this way. But Jessie and Christine are not just any couple. They resemble every other couple by their genuine love for each other, the time they spend together, and their hopes for a happy future. But they have added into the mix a sincere faith in God, a commitment to weekly worship, and experience in helping those less fortunate.

I'm not surprised they chose these rarely-heard scripture readings for their wedding. From Matthew's gospel, near the end of Jesus' life, just days before the crucifixion when he knew his time was short to share what really mattered, he gave the greatest commandments: Love God and love your neighbor. He did not include, "Fall in love with your future spouse," perhaps because he knew that would take care of itself. Christine and Jessie put the two greatest commandments into action, not just by their attendance at mass but by their service at mass, and not just by loving their neighbor but by actually putting food onto the plates of hungry neighbors.

When Saint Paul told the Romans about the mystery of love, he did not dwell on the love of husband and wife, but on the love of Christ, from which nothing will separate us - anguish, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or sword. Paul says, "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." We all long for that kind of love from another human being; we already have that love in Christ. These readings take the focus off the bride and groom and onto Christ, the Father's gift of love to humanity.

Jessie and Christine, thank you for helping us experience the mystery of love so deeply today. You have discerned that your love for each other spins from the love of Christ for you. We pray that you may continue to experience the mystery of divine and human love, rejoice in it together, and share it with all of us.

One more story about my meeting with this couple. We originally scheduled this wedding for 11:30, but they asked me later if we could change the time to 11. I responded the way I still feel. The sooner we get this couple married, the better the earth will be. My brothers and sisters, we too will make the earth better if we think of love the same way - not just our ceaseless, selfish desire for someone to love us, but our love of neighbor and our mutual love with God.

Saturday, June 22, 2019