

Some things just take a long time. Alan and Jackie have been looking forward to this day for many years. The path to this day has not been as direct or as quick as they were hoping it would be. Every good project has obstacles that need to be overcome. But if the project is worthwhile and the people are determined, good results will come through.

This is especially true in love. A love that is brief may be exciting, for a while, but if it is not strong enough to overcome obstacles, it will fail in time. A love that lasts is a love that is true. Jesus says that God made people male and female from the beginning of creation. Each of them leaves father and mother and the two become one flesh. It takes a while for people to grow, to mature, to know who they are and what they are called to be. In the mystery of love, God reveals a plan in which he has played a part from the beginning of creation. That plan unfolds over time, and as it does we see more clearly the beauty of God's ways.

Alan and Jackie, it has taken a long time for you to come here today. Through many years, your love for each other has remained strong. It brings a smile to your face. It puts joy in your heart. That love is a gift from God. You can tell by its strength. Multiply that strength and you will start to experience how God loves you. All these many years have proven your love for each other. They should also have proven God's love for you. That is what we celebrate today.

The world needs the witness of strong love. We live in a culture where people are quick to hate, to think of themselves, to push others away, to taint what is good, and to circumvent the law. Into this world we need some stabilizing force that will show people the right way. The best such force is the strongest one known to us; it is the force of love. Every married couple, just by making their commitment, stakes a claim to what the world can be. It can be a place where a person lives for another, where communication will lead to understanding, and where goodness will flower. No human love is perfect, and no marriage is perfect, but each marriage shows what each of us can be; it lifts the standards by which we are called to live.

Alan and Jackie, now is a time for your love to be made sacred, for you to invite God into your relationship in a deeper way than ever before, so that the results of your love will be different, more filled with faith, more open to service, and more nourished by prayer. That too will take time; that too will face obstacles. You will be tempted to forsake your love for God, but God will never forsake you – never has, never will. Your covenant today is not just between the two of you, but with society and the Church and also with God. You pledge to each other a love that will bear witness, a love that will lift others up, and a love that invites you more deeply into the timeless heart of God.