

Christmas is the farthest thing from your mind on a hot summer's day in the middle of July when you've got a wedding to attend, but Christmas has always been around the edges of this particular couple.

Both Brian and Adrienne were baptized as infants here at St. Munchin's. They've known each other a long time. Their families have left their fingerprints all over this place. They appreciate faith and community, even in the work they like to do. Adrienne is attracted to serving those with ill health. Brian likes the technology that gets people talking with one another. In the hours of their day, they make the world a better place, where people look out for one another and talk to one another. They stay involved in their church and community. Christ is never far from their hearts, and ice cream is never far from their hands.

Brian has always loved Christmas midnight mass, and he can tell you the story of how that mass helps him connect with his faith. Adrienne will never forget the start of the Christmas season a couple of years ago when Brian took her to the Plaza lights in Kansas City, got down on one knee, and gave her a ring. Christmas is a time of faith and joy. It is also a time of love.

Saint John says in his first letter that Christmas is the "way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we might have life through him." Saint John goes on, lest we misunderstand something important about love: "In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son."

For most of us, our most intense experience of love comes out in how we feel for another human being. The Book of Genesis expresses this. After creating one male human being and a variety of animals, God realized something was missing. There was no suitable partner for the man. So while the man slept, God pulled a rib from the man's side, closed up the flesh, and built the rib into something the man called a woman. This selfless God did not expect the man to return all his love to his Creator; God wanted him to enjoy a suitable partner. The nature of love is to be shared, not to be clenched. Jesus said it clearly at the Last Supper: "This is my commandment," he says, "love one another as I love you."

Brian and Adrienne, you realize that God has created you, and created you for each other. The reason you have love is that God loved you first, and your mutual love is a flowering of the love God has for you. You understand that your love is meant to be shared further. You are anxious to share it with children and the community at large. We rejoice with you for all that is taking place in your lives, and we thank you for the testimony of your love today.

My brothers and sisters, God is loving each one of us, even now, whether our experience of love has been fulfilling or disappointing. God demonstrated that love most profoundly on the day Jesus was born for our salvation. The more we open our hearts to accept God's love, the more ready we will be to share it with others. Then the miracle of Christmas will be alive and well every day of the year, every year of our life.