

Most folks who go to the hospital hope that the people they meet there will bring them comfort and consolation, treatment for healing, and sometimes a remedy that saves their lives. They usually don't expect they're going there to meet the love of their life, but that is what happened to Chad and Samantha. They were not patients but students in the same nursing unit. Still it's fair to say that at that point of their lives they were looking for a different kind of healing, searching for the one who would fulfill the longing of their hearts. They both share a strong faith; one of the priests who inspired Samantha was Father Bill Caldwell. You may not realize this, but you've chosen his 79th birthday as your wedding day.

Samantha and Chad have selected the Beatitudes for us to hear today, an extremely appropriate passage for this particular couple. The Beatitudes come near the beginning of Matthew's gospel. They open the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus gives his first public address, an overview of his teaching for those who would follow him.

Many of the Beatitudes apply very well to hospital patients, the kind of people that Chad and Samantha ultimately seek to serve. The best hospital care givers know that patients are not room numbers, statistics or ailing body parts; they are human beings. To use Jesus' words, they are among those whom he considers blessed because they are "poor in spirit": they often arrive despondent after an injury or an unexpected diagnosis. Patients are often "those who mourn" — maybe not in front of you, but in the dark of night or privately with the ones they love. Patients are often "meek" — OK, some of them are not. But on the whole, they are called "patients" for a reason: they have to learn patience and to submit themselves to the treatment of professionals fighting for them in labs and operating rooms. So for Chad and Samantha, the Beatitudes can remind them of the kind of people for whom they are dedicating their livelihoods, and how they should look upon them: not as those who are lost, but those who are blessed.

Yet one of these Beatitudes in particular applies to medical professionals: "Blessed are the merciful." Health care is a profession that requires personal sacrifice. People have to keep up in their field to think critically at decisive moments, and make themselves available when they might prefer to do something else. Something motivates them, and in many cases that something is what Jesus identified: They want to be merciful. Jesus goes further: He explains that the reward for those who are merciful is something that does not motivate them, but that they will receive anyway: "They will be shown mercy."

These qualities that make good disciples of Jesus also make good partners in marriage. When each spouse practices these for the benefit of the other, both will grow: being poor in spirit, feeling freedom to share sorrows, showing meekness to the other's preferences, and being a person of mercy, everlasting mercy, showering love on the other even when the other disappoints.

Chad and Samantha, we rejoice with you today, grateful for your friendship, the example of your study and work, and the generosity of your love. We pray with you that you will receive rewards you do not even seek: the mercy of God, who heals and who loves.