

David Coulter & Bailey Rush

David and Bailey have amazing stories about the improbable way they met and the improbable cause that postponed their wedding. David came to the US to play a certain sport we call soccer. He met the girl of his dreams in a school remote for him but near her home town. They put new meaning onto Jesus' saying that in order to be joined to a wife, "a man shall leave his father and mother." I'm sure David's family never dreamed he would travel so far to find a person so near to his heart.

The pandemic of course postponed this wedding. We all had plans that got mislaid, but Bailey and David faced a special difficulty. They wanted David's family here from Scotland. As international travel became impossible, Bailey and David decided to postpone this celebration until both families could come together. This was not just David's wish; it was Bailey's wish. She wanted David's family here as much as he did. This couple understands the importance of family life, and that love is more than an emotion between two people. True love overflows two people.

St. Paul wrote of this in his famous hymn about love: "If I... do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal.... If I give away everything I own...but do not have love, I gain nothing." Paul was not writing about an emotion that surges between two people. He explained how all of us Christians need to treat all others. The love of husband and wife binds a couple together and fills them beyond capacity. They have so much love they have to share it with others. David and Bailey demonstrated that overflowing love as they planned and re-planned this wedding.

They chose the first reading for this ceremony for a similar reason. The Book of Sirach speaks eloquently about the sheer gift that a good wife is to her husband. Of course, a good husband is a sheer gift to his wife as well. Appearances often attract two people like magnets, but in the end, appearances are just appearances—and they fade. Sirach says a good person possesses much more: a peaceful and full life, fear of the Lord, a contented heart, a smiling face, the acquisition of food and thoughtful preparation of meals for others, governance of speech, firmness of virtues, chastity of soul. Not everyone who looks good is good. But David and Bailey have each found a partner whose value goes beyond appearances.

They also believe that the marriage is more important than the wedding. It too goes beyond appearances. A wedding is not a celebration of personal achievement, but a declaration of commitment to a life of sacrifice that will enrich the partners every day that they increase their love. Jesus said no one must separate "what God has joined together." God with inscrutable wisdom helped this couple find each other in improbable ways, tested their love through a time of global distress, and prepared them for a future of love that no one can separate.

As we witness their consent today, let us each thank God for the love we first received from him. When we open our heart to God's love, it overflows. Let us commit ourselves to the values that go beyond appearances and make us one in improbable ways.

Saturday, November 20, 2021