

Anthony Crapisi & Melanie Southworth

Most engaged people serve and love their partner. Anthony and Melanie do too, but together they are passionate about serving others and loving others, especially those disadvantaged by circumstances such as socioeconomic status, disability, skin color, or sex. They met at a Kansas City Royals baseball game, which is fitting for a couple concerned about those who are down and out.

For their wedding Melanie and Anthony chose three scripture readings about the demands of love. Most couples understand that to make it, they have to do more than ride the highs of love. They need to use love to get them through more challenging times. They can't rely on love as a feeling; they make it an act of the will. Falling in love is not enough. You have to choose love again and again.

True love overflows. When two people have it, there is plenty of love to share. We witness this most frequently when couples in love share their love with children. They sacrifice for their children because they love their kids, and they recognize the need.

The Book of Deuteronomy expands love beyond one's own children into the members of one's extended family. As part of the covenant, God made certain demands on the people for their own benefit. If they became aware of some of their kin in need, God said, "You shall freely open your hand and generously lend what suffices to meet that need." You might think this command was temporary or regional, but the Lord continued, "The land will never lack for needy persons; that is why I command you: 'Open your hand freely to your poor and to your needy kin in your land.'" The need is persistent and universal. This isn't just a matter of sharing your resources, as important as that is. It's sharing love. You have plenty of love, the Lord implies. Share it.

Where does that love come from? St. Paul says it comes from Christ. We have each experienced the love of Christ whether or not we realize it. We may know anguish, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or the sword. None of it can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. God has demonstrated love for us and equipped us with love that we can share.

Tonight's gospel sets an even higher bar than showing love to relatives or to Christ. Jesus says, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." This is one of the most countercultural commands from the gospels. We Americans are taught to practice a different command: Hate your enemies. Fight your enemies. Cause your enemies to fail. Jesus says no. You have another way forward, a way consistent with his teaching and the example of his life: Love. Have so much love within you that you even show mercy to those who do not like you. Love them.

Anthony and Melanie, you demonstrate deep insights about love at the beginning of your marriage. Few couples see the fullness of love with this kind of clarity and with this determination. In your work and your lives, you already devote your time and your resources to helping those in need. As we witness today the sealing of your own covenant of love, you challenge us who have received the generous love of Christ to share it with others as you have done: with friend and stranger, family and foe. Love is the way.

Saturday, April 29, 2023