

Anthony Meis & Shannon Brouk

When I first met Shannon last year, she was really happy to start learning things about our Church. Then a few months later, she was really happy to be joining our Church. A few months after that, she was really happy to bring her fiancé to church. And today they're both really happy to be celebrating their wedding at this church.

Both Shannon and Anthony have faced challenges in life, never quite landing on the right relationship until they met each other. They knew a virtual future, but it only recently became real. Even though it appears that everything has been happy, it's not been superficial. They've developed a deep sense of what makes a person happy. Happiness is more than the feeling you get when people devote themselves to you; it's the feeling you get when you devote yourself to someone else. True personal happiness comes from the happiness we give to another.

The first of St. Paul's great letters in the New Testament went to the Church in Rome. He had never been there, but he'd heard about it, he had received questions from people there, he intended to visit, and he sent this epistle ahead to help people get ready for him. He addressed his letter to all Roman Christians, not specifically to engaged couples. But in the passage we just heard today, you can easily apply the advice he gives every Christian to couples who are ready to start a family. He writes, "Let love be sincere... love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack... serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope... persevere in prayer... exercise hospitality."

This is very practical advice for anyone, especially when a relationship threatens to fall off the rails, which surely was happening among the early Roman Christians, prompting Paul to offer these words. When things go wrong, get your head back into love. Don't wait for someone else to make the first move: anticipate others in showing honor. Persevere. Show hospitality to a stranger—maybe that will help you stop continually thinking about yourself.

Shannon and Anthony chose this passage among many possible selections for their wedding, and it says a lot about their priorities. When Paul says, "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice," you can hear him say, "Don't strive for superficial happiness. Become the kind of person who sacrifices for others; that will make you truly happy."

Anthony and Shannon, you straddle worlds of reality and virtual reality. You work in computer design and cybersecurity. But you love nature in the countryside and got engaged on a hayride. You know the temptations that glitz can offer, but you find satisfaction in smaller, subtler ways.

As you give your consent to each other today, we pray with you that God will help you see through the glamour and into the words, through the superficial joys and into those that really matter. Because of your willingness to sacrifice to each other and to the world, you will know more deeply every day what it is to be truly happy.