

About 25 years ago I met Bill Gorman, vice president and general manager of what was then known as the Omaha Golden Spikes Baseball Team. I was planning a trip to New Orleans with my parents, and he provided tickets for us to see the Zephyrs. Near the end of the game, a batter hit a ball into the infield that struck the ground at a weird angle outside the reach of the fielder. That one play changed the course of the game, and the Zephyrs lost. Afterwards I called Bill to thank him for the tickets and explained how the game ended. He sounded unsurprised at what should have been a surprising finish to the game and offered this bit of wisdom: “Baseball is a game of funny hops.”

As each of us learns, life is a game of funny hops. Sometimes a surprising turn of events brings an unexpected result. When Rafael and Brooke enrolled in college, they did not fully understand that that decision would introduce them to the love of their life. Years later, the elaborate moment of engagement did not at all go the way Rafael had planned. In their professional careers, Brooke and Rafael are helping people deal with the funny hops of life. In health care, insurance braces you for the unexpected. In baseball, if kids want to play well, they have to practice under good guidance for all the uncertainties that can come their way in the moment it takes for a ball to strike the infield.

When St. Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians, he addressed a community strong in faith but experiencing uncertainties. They expected the Second Coming of Christ would be imminent, and they adjusted their ways of living accordingly. They were anxious, disturbed by current events, worried about their ineffectiveness, and inconsistent in their practice of the faith. They needed assurance, and they needed insurance. Paul served as their coach, guiding them through this difficult time toward the glory that awaited them if they prepared well.

Rafael and Brooke, you have used this time of engagement to prepare yourselves not just for this day but for a future of family life. You know from your experience in your own families you cannot prepare for every eventuality, but you still better prepare well. You build a life on strong foundations, such as financial stability, family ties, jobs that build up other people, and most importantly faith in Jesus Christ. He is the best insurance of your spiritual health, the one upon whom you can rely through all the funny hops of life.

Here's again the advice St. Paul addressed to those Philippians, one of the scripture passages you chose for us to hear today as you start your married life together. Paul writes, “Rejoice in the Lord always.... The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all... make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.... Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” Saint Paul offers this key to peace: think about the right things. If like the Philippians you keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen from those who shared faith with you, you will rejoice. You will have the best insurance against any uncertainty; you will have the best coach: Jesus Christ.