

Dancing Together: A wedding Sermon

Carol Mubiru & Godfrey Batte Wedding

Our Lady of the Way Parish. Arlington Heights, IL. September 21, 2013

Readings: Sirach 26:1-4, 13-16; Romans 8: 31b-35; 37-39; John 2:1-11

My Dear Carol, My Dear Godfrey,

Congratulations on this day of your wedding. It is a joyous day; a day of celebration and thanksgiving. But it is also a day of gratitude to God for the gift of family life and sexual intimacy. I join your parents, family and friends to congratulate you, and to pray for you. It is your day. You have invited us to join you in celebrating your love, but also to see you, to observe you, to witness as you make public your love for each other, and promise before God and the world that the love and friendship that exists between you is both real and serious. And that it has the same lasting, enduring and intimate faithfulness as the love between Christ and His Church. You are here to make your love a “sacrament”: a sign of God’s own love. And you have invited us to be witnesses to that.

Before anything else, I want to congratulate you. First, my dear friend Godfrey – Congratulations to you on finding Carol. You have just doubled the length of your life. For as the Book of Sirach says: *Blessed the husband of a good wife, twice-lengthened are his days. A worthy wife brings joy to her husband, peaceful and full is his life. ... Like the sun rising in the Lord’s heavens, the beauty of a virtuous wife is the radiance of her home.*

To my dear Carol, Congratulations to you too – for finding a good mate in Godfrey. For what the book of Sirach says of a good wife is also true of a good husband: rare to find, a gift from God: *A gracious wife delights her husband, her thoughtfulness puts flesh on his bones,*” is as much true of a good husband. He delights his wife and puts flesh on her bones. So, Congratulations.

But the book of Sirach knows that the qualities that make a good wife as well as a good husband are not only just magical gifts from God. Sirach speaks about “governed speech”; “firm virtue”; “modesty” and a “temperate soul” – to indicate that these are qualities that have to be cultivated; to be developed. These are the sort of things that only come with practice and discipline. They are the sort of things that a husband and wife have to work at every day if they are to become a good wife and a good husband.

I enjoy watching the ABC reality show *Dancing with the Stars*. It is a beautiful show, now in season 17. I enjoy the choreography; the beautiful, incredible moves of the dancing teams. There is also something about the beauty, the abandon, the grace and a sense of ‘freedom’ as the teams dance away. As I watch these beautiful teams dance on the floor, I find myself

wondering, “ how are they able to do it?” Part of the reason I love the show, I suspect, is that it reminds how much I love to dance, but that I neither have the opportunity, nor the skills of dancing. And on the show, you can vote for your favorites, even though I personally never vote. But I enjoy watching not only the stars dance with the pros, but also the reaction of the audience and especially of the judges: Carrie Ann Inaba; Len Goodman, and Bruno Tonioli. This Bruno is something. He is crazy: Last week after Amber & Derek’s incredible performance, Bruno could not contain his excitement. In his Bruno way he stood up, and with wild gestures and writhing declares: “*this is fantastic, you are amazing; amber you are a tigress...*” He always uses exaggerated gestures, language and superlatives. I just get dizzy watching Bruno. But that is not the point. The performances are indeed extraordinary.

It is particularly fascinating when the show takes us behind the scenes and shows us the stars as they practice before the show; basically how they learn to dance with the pros. Some of them begin with no dancing skills at all. Others are overweight; clumsy; and the training, practice just gets to be too much for them. They fall down, they collapse; they bruise tendons and at times even break a muscle. They literally sweat as they practice. But they never give up, but keep working at it. And so the pros pick them up, and coach them in the ABC of dancing: one, two three..., one two three...It is this basic, slow, painstaking, constant, persistent, enduring practice, and the trust that the stars and pros establish, that leads to amazing results.

Godfrey and Carol, the most important time of your marriage will be time behind the scenes; when you pick each other up; when you practice how to live as husband and wife; that is where you will learn what marriage is all about; how to not give up on each other; how to anticipate each other’s steps or moves, how to do the slow ABC of parenting; how to get in synch. For each of you have until now mastered some dance moves on your own. They are good, and have been helping you navigate life as single person. Now you have to learn to dance together and that might mean/will mean changing the moves you already know; giving up some things your cherish; learning new moves; learning to move together; working with each other. There will be times when you feel like giving up, and thinking: perhaps this is not for me. And other times even thinking “if only I had a better partner.” The problem is not your partner, but learning to dance TOGETHER. I admire the patience of the pros as they work with the stars; when they collapse, or are injured, they lift them up, and encourage them: let’s try again: one, two three... one two three...

Carol and Godfrey, as you learn this dance of marriage, be patient with each other; Do not be selfish. Look out for each other. Give your all to each other and to your life together. Walk together and talk to each other. But also laugh together and at yourselves. Do not take yourselves too seriously. It’s a dance! Enjoy each other as your communicate deeply not only about the big issues and decisions, but about the little, trivial nonsenses of everyday life.

This is how you learn to dance together, but also to go far in your life together. An African proverb says, *if you want to go fast walk alone, but if you want to go far, walk together*. Give us an opportunity like Bruno to see you and say: incredible, amazing couple!

Remember you are not alone. I am glad you have chosen as your second reading this passage from the letter to the Romans 8: 3-9: *"If God is for us who can be against us."* Always remember this. God is for you. And therefore do not let neither trouble nor hardship, neither sickness nor health, neither wealth nor poverty, neither friends nor family, ever separate you from one another and from that love of God in which you stand. Therefore keep God at the center of your life together. And I know your love for the blessed mother. The Gospel reading you chose (Jn 2:1-11) shows Mary at the wedding at Cana interceding on behalf of the newly married couple, *"they have no wine."* She will be there to intercede for you at the happy moments of your life to make sure nothing spoils the radiance of your home that Sirach speaks about. This passage is at the beginning of John's Gospel (Chapter 2). Towards the end of the Gospel in John there is another story about Mary (and these are the only two places in the Gospel of John where Mary, Jesus mother appears): This is other story is in Jn 19: 25 at the Cross of Jesus: *"Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene."*

Mary will be there at the difficult moments of your marriage, the moments of trial and hardship, of pain and suffering. Turn to her. She will shield and protect you. Those days will come; but for now, it is the wedding at Cana; and we are talking about joy, celebration and an abundance of wine! And so I, your families and friends join Mary to pray for you, to wish you well in your life together – and to join you in this moment of celebration. Congratulations to you. May God's blessings be with you today and all the days of your married life. AMEN.

Fr. Emmanuel Katongole