



Wedding of Mphaga Rhulani Charzen and Phindokuhle Zamakhuze Zikalala



Date: Saturday, December 14, 2019 | **Season:** Advent | **Year:** C

First Reading: Genesis 2:18-24

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 103:1-2, 8 and 13, 17-18a | **Response:** Psalm 103:8a

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:31-13

Gospel Acclamation: 1 John 4:12, 16

Gospel Reading: Mark 10:6-9

Preached at: the Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Braamfontein in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg, South Africa.

You are all welcome to this Church of the Holy Trinity. We are all gathered here in this Church to share in this joyous occasion together and to celebrate the love that Mphaga and Phindokuhle both share for each other.

Christians have long believed that human persons bear the *imago Dei*, the image of God. May you each in your own way, strive every day to be that image of God for each other: to light and illumine, to help and protect, to support and encourage, to love and be loved. In this relationship, God can only act in and through you. Allow yourselves to witness and testify to God's love for you and for each other.

Vows are sacred and solemn oaths, not lightly undertaken. In just a moment, we will all hear you pronounce your wedding vows. Just as God made a covenant with his people, you are making a covenant with each other. Your words do not just echo through this church this afternoon, but they will echo into eternity. We live in an age where autonomy and freedom are seen to be absolute values. The paradox of this is that the greatest gift one can give is to freely give up their freedom – to bind oneself to another for life – and yet this is seen often in our culture as a gift too impossible to contemplate. This gift only makes sense if it is done, as you are doing, out of love. Your decision today to enter into a Christian Marriage is a powerful counter-cultural witness to the grace of love.

When you say “until death do us part”, you are vowing your freedom and fidelity to each other, and to help each other and love each other every day for the rest of your lives, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health. Christian marriage is not imposed upon persons from the outside. It can

only ever be freely chosen. Chesterton once said that “It is the nature of love to bind itself, and the institution of marriage merely paid the average person the compliment of taking them at their word.” I do not like it when people say that their wedding day was the highlight of their married life together. If that were so, then everything else from now on would be downhill! No – not at all! The wedding day is a beginning, a special moment to be sure, but one that captures the great, glorious and generous desires you have for each other. In this moment, when you are enamoured with each other and surrounded by your loved ones, you choose to declare your love and your desire to never be apart again. The Church then serves as a reminder of this moment.

In declaring that marriage is lifelong, she does not add any burden or weight, but merely stands as testament to the vows that you yourselves make. Of course your vows are not just words – but rather they are words that represent actions. St Ignatius – a favourite in this place – said that Love shows itself more in deeds than in words. You have chosen beautiful words to represent your love – but I am confident that they will be translated into even more amazing actions. You have chosen Jesus Christ as your model of how to love, and his actions will surely guide you. I know that you are both part of regular cell and bible-study groups. This is a wonderful way of including Jesus, who is the Word, and the Church community in your lives. As you study the Scriptures together, and reflect on your own lives and experiences, you will be inspired by the Holy Spirit to love concretely, and to love well.

So we rejoice together that you have found in each other your soul-mate, your best friend, your companion, and we give thanks to God for the families that have nurtured you both, and raised you so responsibly, and modelled for you how to love so freely and generously, in good times and in bad.

In closing, I have only two pieces of advice.

The first is that you never forget these four phrases when dealing with each other. They are very simple, ‘Please’, ‘Thank you’, ‘Sorry’ and ‘I love you’. In always saying ‘please’ you will protect yourself from becoming overbearing or entitled. In always saying ‘thank you’ you will save yourself from becoming selfish as you renew your dependence on each other. In always saying ‘sorry’ quickly when you are wrong or mistaken, you will be able to give the other the gift of

forgiving you, which will lead to harmony and peace. In always saying ‘I love you’ you will be reminded to not just say the words, but to show your love in concrete ways.

The second piece of advice is that you always remember to pray together. With God nothing is impossible, and what God has joined together, no person can divide.

And so, as in recent years, and now for the rest of your lives, you are, with God, each other’s Number One priority and concern. I pray that this new married relationship that you will forge will continue to deepen and strengthen, and bear much fruit.

On behalf of everyone here, I wish you well and pray that God will seal your love and sanctify you both and bless you and your family abundantly, this day and every day.

Amen.

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