



Wedding of Christopher John Knezovich and Simone Nicole Chiappa



Date: Saturday, October 10, 2020 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** A

First Reading: Genesis 2:18-24

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 144:8-9, 10, 15, 17-18 | **Response:** Psalm 144:9a

Second Reading: Romans 12:1-2, 9-18

Gospel Acclamation: 1 John 4:16

Gospel Reading: John 15:9-12

Preached at: the Catholic Church of the Resurrection in Bryanston in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg, South Africa.

I met Christopher and Simone at their Engaged Encounter weekend PC – that’s pre-COVID. And when they asked me to marry them I was deeply touched. But so much seems to have happened since then and yet, by God’s grace, we are all gathered here this afternoon, in this wonderful space – what I like to think of as an outdoor chapel – in a new world, that neither Christopher nor Simone probably ever imagined. And whilst we endeavor to practice physical distancing and the myriad of health protocols that are now becoming second-nature to us, it is a joy for us all to draw a little bit physically closer this afternoon to celebrate the love of Christopher and Simone for each other.

And they are very much in love. In fact, when I visited them last weekend, it seems their families are already so much part of each other’s lives and one gets a sense that they are truly – and in some cases quite literally - building a home and a life together. They desire to do this in marriage, and with us all as witnesses. Of course, you realise that when you attend a wedding – there is no free lunch. All of us here today, in agreeing to celebrate and witness this wedding – are also committing ourselves to support them in this noble and worthy enterprise of life together. An enterprise that sadly not everyone is privileged to participate in. But an enterprise that truly needs the support of friends, family, the Church and those who share their journey of faith, so as to build them up and encourage them along life’s ups and downs.

In our first reading we hear how the Lord God made a partner for man – I suppose if Genesis was written today they’d have called her man 2.0 – or perhaps man would be woman 0.1? - but the scripture writers went with woman. And no-

tice how there is equality in Genesis' description "at last, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh" – truly an equal partner inside and out. And it closes with the words that they will leave father and mother and the two will become one. In an Italian family, you have my sympathies – I'm told that leaving one's in-laws is more difficult than you might realise. But I met some of them last week, and at least they have a sense of humour. They announced they were at the Church for the wedding practice, meanwhile they were outside on the drive. So Christopher and Simone, I do not think you will have much success there - but in fact that is a blessing, to grow up and have your families near you, a blessing rich indeed.

But that other point about becoming one, is I know very dear to you both. We spoke about it before, about Unity. And it's only possible, indeed it is the condition and the sign of mutual love. And it is what distinguishes marriage as a vocation instead of just a contract. Contracts can be re-written, cancelled or made void. Marriage is for life. It is not just a mutually beneficial pursuit of happiness together – as nice and as necessary as that is. Unity will not be the result of you feeling happy. Instead the converse is true... It is happiness that will be the result of your being ONE! In a way, you have found the missing piece that we believe God created especially for each of you so that you might complete and perfect each other. There will be sacrifice as St Paul noted in our 2nd reading, but if you keep trying to do God's will, which is only anything that is good and pleasing and perfect for you, it will lead you deeper in love with each other. And remember to forgive often. Asking for forgiveness will help heal wounds and help you towards that unity you so desire. By becoming one, you will find happiness, and you will know love, and you will be a sign of peace and unity to the world. And there is only one commandment really, as we heard in the Gospel, to love each other as God loves you.

So I hope, on this fine day, that you remember just how much God loves you. How much God has blessed you. And how much God desires only good things for you. Because that is how he is asking you to love each other.

And so before I ask them to come forward, I'd like to ask the rest of us to also remember just how much God has loved each of you, and if there was any doubt, how he is revealing and reminding us of his love through the love of Christopher and Simone. Not only that, but he is inviting the rest of us to also bask in that

love and glory which can only come from God, and to support them in their journey together. For although marriage is exclusive, it truly flourishes within the institutions of friendship and family, which it both needs and in turn supports.

[Due to severe COVID-19 restrictions, the Archdiocese granted me permission to solemnise a marriage of a Catholic outside a Catholic Church, and the marriage was conducted in the spacious garden of their home, which allowed for social distancing.]

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