

## Notes from the Liturgist...

### I WILL ALWAYS BE YOUR BEST FRIEND

After all, to the different interviews that I have especially when it comes to a wedding, it really helped me to grow and learn to the different things in life especially when it comes to a relationship. A relationship is very important to each and every one of us because if there is no good relationship there is no great love. I just want to share with you about The Rite of the Sacrament of Matrimony and I believe that it is very symbolic and significant in the church that will help us also to grow as pilgrim people.

Marriage is founded on unconditional friendship - the couple's friendship with each other and their friendship with the Lord. It celebrates selfless love for the beloved which is the Lord's very own brand of love: "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends." (Jn.15:13)

The Bride, dressed in white, is the symbol of the Church. What great beauty this is for her! The aisle symbolizes the pilgrimage on earth leading to heaven. It symbolizes the historical phrases of salvation that the Church is walking on and marching through - from this life to the next. Of beginnings, transitions, and endings. In our case, fulfillment of His plan.

This is the reason why there is an entrance procession at Mass. It reminds us of our own march towards that great Sunday - that final day of the Lord which will never end. In reality, every Sunday at Mass, we rehearse our "march" and "arrival" in heaven, where we will finally eat and drink in the eternal Marriage banquet. In reality, every Marriage in Church is a powerful and eloquent vision of our common destiny in God. At the end of the march and near the altar, the program awaits. Who is the groom? He represents the Lord Jesus, the Bridegroom Himself. How great an honor this is for him!

Whenever there is a Wedding, I am always eager to see that moment of encounter between the Bride (Church) and the Groom (Jesus) because it is actually a PREVIEW of that great event in the end - when we, the Church, will meet the Lord, face to face, together with the throng and cloud of witnesses, the communion of saints represented by the parents, the godparents and all present there.

Then, after that long pilgrimage of struggle on earth over sin and death (symbolized by the Bride marching down the aisle towards the altar), here she comes... anticipating, step by step, the face of the loved one - the Beloved Savior. On the Savior's part, He anticipates our coming, too and our return with that deep yearning and longing like that of the Merciful Father waiting for the lost prodigal Son or the joy of the Good Shepherd finding, at last, the lost sheep!

As we led through the rites of the exchange of marriage of vows and the nuptial blessing, we hear the echoes of the covenant between a man and God. In fact, the Bride and Groom are actually the ministers of the Sacrament. The priest is the prime witness and the one to solemnize the covenant between the man and the woman.

This is the beauty of the liturgical ceremony because the symbols, words, and gestures speak of what we truly believe in. And if the wedding is in the context of the Holy Mass, we see in a far more perfect way the fulfillment of the unity between man and God, the alliance of that great love accomplished on the cross and at the shedding of the Lord's blood and the sacrifice of His Body which is to be the model of unconditional love for the married couple.

Such is the beauty of the Marriage rite and its meaning! In the context of the Catholic Church, it is not just any rite but a Sacrament for it is the very act of Jesus blessing and gracing the union of two hearts: a man and a woman giving their consent to love one another until death, or even beyond it. It proclaims the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb. It proclaims our own love story with God.

"... I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor all the days of my life."

We are then edified to strengthen the friendship that we are called to be in and have - that is, the friendship with the Lord, whether we are married, single, or consecrated. He is the Lord who will always tell us: "I WILL ALWAYS BE YOUR BEST FRIEND."  
-Ace Tupasi