

## “Marriage”

Homily of February 18, 2006

by Fr. Aidan McAleenan

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You all know that the pastor has been away for a whole week, and he's only called just one time. When he called on Friday, I said, "You couldn't resist. You're just too nosey." But anyway, just last Friday, before he left, he said, "Father Aidan, could I see you in my office, please?" So I went in and I sat down, and he said, "I have just one thing to say to you. If you have any bright ideas in the next eight days, write them down." And I said, "Whatever..." It felt like a parent and a kid, you know. So, anyway, off I went, and about ten minutes, after reflecting on it, I thought, "Well..." I went back in again and I said, "What are the parameters of these bright ideas?" He said, "Don't change anything in the church." So, you see those two extra candles up there. That's one little change.

Today, you know the Gospel, our "Yes" is us being here this morning. Paul talks about our yes is our yes to God. We're here. We're present. We know who the Christ is in a very powerful way. And this morning I wanted to reflect with you on three things. The first thing, friendship; the second thing, marriage because our pastor is so powerful in the Church that he changed World Marriage Day from last weekend when the whole world was celebrating it to Pleasant Hill's version of it which is this Sunday. So, at the 10:45 Mass we are going to have thirty-five couples and we are going to celebrate their marriages, and we are going to do a little bit of that here and now. And then, the third part of the homily is John is going to talk to us about the friendship that is involved in the Christ the King experience, and an invitation to a Cursillo Retreat that we are going to have in May.

First things first. There were four people. We are not told if they were male or female, or how they were related to the paralytic man. But we know that he had four friends. And we all have friendships in our lives. I particularly remember, one of the first friendships that I remember, on the day that I started kindergarten, my mom took me by the hand and we walked four blocks to school and, at the top of the hill, going down to the church, Catholic School, we met Bridey Savage, my friend John Savage's mom, and he was with his mom by the hand. And they started chatting because they knew one another. And from that day, we were put into Mrs. McMillan's class, first grade/ kindergarten class. We were set together and we have been friends ever since. Now, we've been at weddings and ordinations and the birth of his kid (They have one child.) and we'll always be friends. We contact, you know, Christmas cards and that type of thing.

Some other friends that I have in my life, my friend Joe... When I started off in high school, I met t his.... We affectionately knew him, everybody at school. He was nearly six feet when we

were first year in high school and he was about two hundred twenty pounds. So he's a big guy. So everybody at school called him "Big Joe." So everybody knows Big Joe, and when he was asked who he was (You know read out your names as you go to every class.) "Joe Owens, O-W-E-N-S." And I thought, "That guy's really obnoxious!" Turns out that Joe and I have become life long friends..the kind that are always there for you when you need them and visa versa.

A

nother friend I met when I was down in the seminary in the West of Ireland. Her name was "Olive." She was about twenty years older than I. She was the executive director of the Samaritans, which is a group that provides a suicide hotline that is very famous in Ireland and Britain. She and I instantly clicked. So I used to go over the monastery wall, the Redemptorist wall, and go with her and her husband for a pint of Guinness. And the novice master caught me one day, going over the wall. "Brother Aidan, could I talk to you a moment?" And I said, "Yes, Father Master." ..."I've noticed that you and Olive Fitzgerald are scooting down the road in her little mini car. Where are you going?" I said, "Well, actually, we're going for a pint." You couldn't tell a lie. He says, "What will the neighbors think?" I said, "I don't care what the neighbors think, if they've got bad minds." So, she and I have really been very.... You know, there is just that moment when you really click with somebody in your life, and she and her husband and I (They have the most wonderful marriage.) are really good friends.

Thinking and reflecting on friendship is "Who are the four people who would lead any of us down and lay us before Jesus, or carry us on the journey of life?" And I think reflecting on that is a really good thing, which is a really easy jump into marriage, isn't it, because who are our best friends in our lives? (Turning to individuals in the congregation...) Who is your best friend? (...It better be him!) Who is your best friend? OK! Now, out of the thirty-five couples who have signed up for this Mass, what do you think is the couple married longest? Paul and Bert who sit here every day at Mass! They are sixty-two years married and we are going to honor them in a very special way today. So, that being said, who is sixty years married here? OH! You are sixty-one! Well, since you are sixty-one years married we will give you a bunch of flowers!! (Lots of cheering.) Oh, fifty-seven today? Give them a big hand! (More cheering!)

I asked one of the volunteers to call all of the people, the thirty-five, and I need help with my homily and I want you to tell me words of wisdom for a long, happy married life. So, Father Aidan's Top Ten! They are in no particular order. The first one is "Do as you are told." (From the wife?) The second one was, "Laugh a lot. Have a good sense of humor." The third was, "It's all about communication and love." And love as a verb, not just a feeling, but something that you do. Number four: "Keep God as part of the partnership. And thank him always, every day, for your blessings." Number five: "Expect the unexpected and keep God at the center of your marriage." And this one, "Keep your mouth shut." So, I don't know. I'm not married; so I don't know. One couple were married on the fourth of July and guess what they said? "Keep the fireworks going." You've got to have fireworks and that could have all sorts of meaning. So, we'll just leave that to your own imagination. Number eight, "Give one another one hundred

percent and compromise when needed.” Number nine, “Always be best friends.” I have married ten couples and I wonder, when they are walking out the door, how it’s going to be for them. What I have started to do, the last five, is I said to them, “Keep this. Never go to bed angry.” Remember this day (I usually write their names and the date of their marriage on this candle. Never go to bed angry. Place this somewhere that is prominent in your home. And remember this day, as when all your family and your friends and the Church and God, everybody’s here present, witnessing the love that you have for one another. Remember that love and when you need to, light the candle, and place it somewhere that you both recognize. And know that you are forgiven. I think whatever we can do not to go to bed angry.... Is there anything anybody wants to add, words of wisdom that you can throw out? “Respect!” Yes, that was another one. (Aside to one parishoner, “You’re not married. You’re not allowed to talk.”)

I would like all the people who are couples here to stand up, if you are here as a married couple. Now, turn to one another. Look into one another’s eyes. You might want to get a little closer. (laughter!) Now, you have to repeat after me, when I get to that point. Dear friends, on your wedding day, you stood before the Church’s minister and the community and solemnly vowed your love. On this World Marriage Day, at Christ the King, you stand before the faith community as a reminder of the great beauty of the sacrament and covenant of matrimony. You stand before your children who reflect the life and love you have given to them through marriage. You stand before those who are living the single vocation in the Church. Your marriage vows complement their lives of commitment and service to the Lord’s call. You stand before widows and widowers who recall the love and commitment given to their spouses. You stand before us as witnesses to the married love which Christ abundantly blessed you with on your wedding day. I invite you now to renew the promises you made on that day of mutual love and lasting fidelity. So, I will ask you to repeat after me, and I will say “I have taken you. I take you again,” whatever the name of the spouse is that you are standing in front of “to be my spouse.” OK. So, repeat after me, “I have taken you, and take you again.” (You have to say their names. Do you remember the names?) “to be my spouse. (You’re supposed to be looking in one another’s eyes, not looking at me!) “I promise to be true to you in good times and bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.” You have renewed your marriage vows before the Church. May the Lord in his goodness strengthen your commitment and fill you with blessings. Amen. ....Congratulations! (Lots of applause!!)