

Wedding of Michael Paprocki and Sarah Torpy
Christ the King Church
Chicago, Illinois
October 12, 2013

S.S.P.: The cross is the reminder of Christ's love, which is the model for married love.

For those of you who don't know, my name is Bishop Thomas John Paprocki, and the groom is my nephew, Michael Paprocki. That means I've known him all his life and could make this homily really interesting with some inside information. Actually I am very proud of my nephew and I don't have anything to say that would be embarrassing to him. At least I don't think so, but I do have one little known fact about Mike that you might find interesting.

It's no secret to most of us that my nephew Mike enjoys comic books. Over the past twenty years or so, he has amassed a collection of over 5,000 comic books. Perhaps most people don't know where Mike gets his comic books from. The fact is, every Wednesday, for the past 2 decades, Mike has stopped by a store on 111th street just east of Kedzie called Alternate Reality.

Well, Mike and Sarah, I'm here today to tell you that you are about to enter into an alternate reality.

Not only is this an alternate reality because you will be leaving behind the reality of single life and entering the reality of a life together for as long as you both shall live, but even more so, because you have chosen to celebrate your marriage within the context of the Sacrament of Matrimony.

This sacrament, like all the sacraments, is a journey into an alternate reality that we call the Kingdom of God. So, why is it an alternate reality?

The Kingdom of God is an alternate reality because it is a reality in which God's will is done, not your will or my will. The married life that you are entering into is a taste of and a preparation for an eternity of living according to a will that is not your own. Not that either of you will be blindly submitting to the will of your spouse, but BOTH of you will be submitting to the will of your marriage and eventually, your family. You are entering an alternate reality.

And, just as in the alternate realities of comic books where there is always a superhero who battles the forces of evil to claim victory for justice and goodness, the Kingdom of God is championed by an extraordinary figure, Jesus Christ.

In the alternate reality that is the Kingdom of God, Jesus points the way for how to conquer the false values of this world...the reality that you are leaving behind. In the alternate reality of the Kingdom of God, Jesus conquers sin and death. And he doesn't rely on a light saber, a spider web, a hammer, or a batmobile. Rather, he relies on a very strange and unexpected weapon: the cross. Jesus conquers sin and death by the ultimate act of selfless love - by giving up his own life.

Mike and Sarah, as you enter this alternate reality, you are invited to conquer the challenges of this world by practicing selfless love the same way your parents and grandparents have exemplified for you all the years of your lives.

But the story of the Kingdom of God does not end with the Cross but with the Resurrection...new life that conquers sin and death. Mike and Sarah, your old lives are being laid to rest but a glorious new life is beginning. And by practicing selfless love for all the days of your lives together, you will continue to experience the joy of the Resurrection...the new life that is ours in the alternate reality we call the Kingdom of God.

Now, adjusting to this alternate reality is not easy. Sarah learned all about adjusting to an alternate reality last year when she began her teaching career in the Chicago Public schools. There, she was called upon day in and day out to practice selfless love, serving the needs of inner city children. That was not easy. Neither is adjusting to married life. Like the alternate realities of comic books and yes, Chicago public schools, the alternate reality that we call the Kingdom of God is a place filled with mystery where all is not as it seems. This is a reality where the first are last and the last are first; enemies are loved; persecutors are prayed for; the other cheek is turned; forgiveness is given not 7 times but 70 times 7 times; the poor are blessed; the rich are sent away empty; boasting of strengths is replaced by boasting of weaknesses, and, if that's not enough, new life comes from death.

You will have to do some unlearning to adjust to this new reality. Marriage is the perfect prescription for that because you will gradually begin to develop a whole new way of thinking that no longer revolves around yourself but around one another and your children. I suppose it's

fair to say that you are about to have your own George Costanza moment, to reference a show that both of you enjoy, *Seinfeld*.

Now I must admit that I'm not a big *Seinfeld* fan myself. In fact, I don't think I've ever watched a full episode from start to finish. So I'm relying here on my brother Joe, your Dad, who tells me that in one of the most famous *Seinfeld* episodes, George Costanza comes to the realization that the way he has been living his life has been all wrong and that life is the opposite of the way it should be. Jerry, of course, tells him that, "if every instinct you have is wrong, then the opposite would have to be right."

George resolves to start doing the complete opposite of his instincts and, as a result, experiences a string of incredible successes. What's key is his reaction. He comes back to tell Jerry and Elaine, "I tell you this: something is happening in my life! I did this opposite thing last night. Up was down; black was white; good was bad; day was night. This is no longer just some crazy notion. Jerry, Elaine...this is my religion!"

Well, Mike and Sarah, this Kingdom of God that you've heard about is not just some crazy notion. It is your religion. And that is why you've chosen to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony. I'm not telling you that every decision you've made in your life up to this point has been wrong, but I am here today to tell you that the key to thriving in the Kingdom of God is to begin thinking the opposite of how the world usually thinks.

To do that, you must follow the instruction of our Blessed Mother that we just heard in the Gospel of Saint John, when she said to the stewards at the marriage of Cana after they had run out of wine, "Do whatever He [Jesus] tells you" (John 2:5-8).

You must model yourself after Jesus who, even though he was Lord and Master, got down on his knees and washed the feet of his disciples. Remember that when you're changing diapers.

You must model yourself after Jesus who, as he hung on the Cross, said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." Remember that when you have a fight and are convinced that your spouse is the focal point of all evil.

You must pattern yourselves after Jesus who said, “Not my will, but your will be done” and then laid down his life on the Cross. Remember that when you’re feeling sorry for yourself because you don’t seem to get your way all the time.

And finally, pattern yourselves after Jesus who, after he rose from the dead, told his disciples, “I will be with you always, even until the end of time.” Remember that each and every day of your married lives.

To help you remember this message, I’m giving you this crystal cross, not only as my wedding gift to you, but as a reminder of the greatest symbol of love that this world has ever seen.

Mike and Sarah, the time has come. Let us step foot into the alternate reality of the Kingdom of God where together you will live the rest of your lives with the One who conquers all: Jesus Christ!

May God give us this grace. Amen.