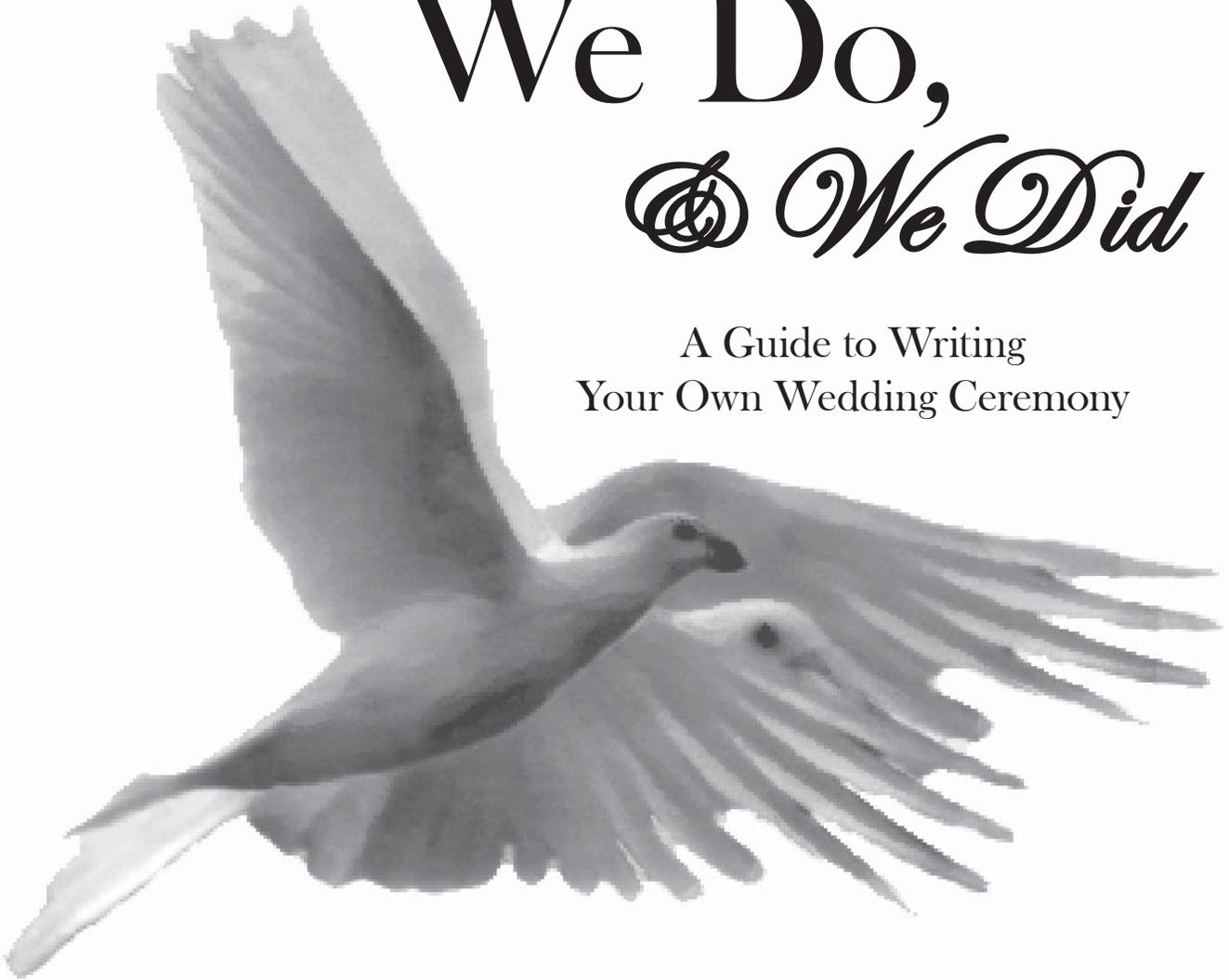


We Do, & We Did

A Guide to Writing
Your Own Wedding Ceremony



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Part One: We Do

Planning your wedding together is one of the best ways there can be to learn about your relationship— to explore and talk about the life that you hope to share, and to learn what you will need to do to make that life together possible.

There are many forms that a wedding ceremony can take, from the very orthodox and traditional to the most spontaneous and informal. As you begin thinking about the kind of ceremony that you want, remember that it should reflect the nature of the relationship that it celebrates. If you include readings they should speak for you, and any music should be special to the two of you. Invite the people who are important to you, and honor the very special ones by asking them to be your attendants. Make your wedding a public declaration of your love for one another, and a joyous celebration of the agreement that you have made to share a home and life together.

The days leading up to the ceremony can be stressful at times. Sudden upsets in your plans may make it seem that you have lost control of the whole situation, and the sense of commitment you have made may seem at times replaced by the heavier feelings of obligation instead. And then there will be those moments of panic, when you suddenly realize how deep and enormous the commitment you are making really is. The best way to get through these difficult moment is to make sure that your commitment remains first and foremost to one another, and that it is always accompanied by a delicious anticipation of the life that you two are bound to share, when the guests have gone and the marriage truly begins. Support one another gently throughout these days, and let nothing make you lose sight of the love you have for one another, nor compromise the world that you have chosen to create together.

The decision to marry is not simply a desire to change— it is a decision to grow. We truly fall in love only when we have found a person whose life we recognize will deeply enrich our own. And with this decision we choose to cheer each other on, as we grow in the presence of one another, rather begin trying to change one another from who it was we met into something much less real and inspiring.

Weddings celebrate and exercise our free choice. You have chosen one another to be bride and groom; you now will choose what will happen during your ceremony— and who will take part, and how. Other choices you might make will involve such things as the refreshments, the flowers, the photographers and the musicians, as well as the location, time and place— and of course, the guests.

The choices of who will become members of the wedding party— the bridesmaids and the ushers, the ring-bearer and the flower girl, and especially the officiant, the best man, and the maid of honor— are all very important, for these people will become your guides, your servants, your bodyguards and confidants, right on through the wedding day. For them it is an honor to be chosen; but for you their companionship will be essential, especially as the wedding day draws close. Choose them early, and involve them often.

All the choices that you make should be made together, and need be talked about at length, with careful attention paid to what you are learning about yourselves and one another in the process. And your discussion should focus not only upon what you choose, but also (with great respect and care) why you have chosen your choices as well.

And the most important thing of all to remember as you plan your wedding is that, throughout your years together, you will be celebrating anniversaries of this day. Never lose sight of one another, despite the inevitable confusion and stress during the weeks that lie ahead; and never let go of the vision that has brought the two of you together— for that, after all, is what your wedding day will celebrate.

The Elements of the Ceremony

What will take place during your wedding ceremony? Because the ceremony will reflect the marriage that you want to have, it is you that must decide. The only requirement is that the officiant hears each of you agree to marry the other, and then pronounces you “husband and wife”. However, tradition has provided many other events that can be built into your ceremony.

First of course there is the Processional, which can be a series of formal entrances or an informally spontaneous gathering together; then there is the greeting, in which the officiant welcomes the gathered guests and announces the start of the ceremony, and the invocation, which is a prayer of some sort that is intended to set the tone of the occasion. Music is usually a part of what happens, including perhaps favorite or traditional songs or instrumental music, and they may be either live or prerecorded. Favorite poems or other readings are often prepared, and certain special guests may be invited to speak briefly.

The officiant usually presents a homily, a commentary about marriage in general and perhaps your wedding in particular, after which there is a ring exchange as a token of the bond that is being established between husband and wife. Personal statements may be made by the bride and groom to one another in addition to the vows, which are of course central to the ceremony. The vows themselves may be recited, repeated phrase by phrase after prompting by the officiant, or simply assented to with an “I do” or “I will”. Finally there is the pronouncement, which states something like: “with the authority vested in me, I now pronounce you husband and wife”. Then there is usually a benediction, invoking a spiritual blessing upon the marriage, and a Recessional which, like the Processional, may be as formal or informal as desired.

In addition to these elements, certain traditional rituals have evolved over the centuries which may be included if you choose, employing such items as water, wine, candles, a canopy, or perhaps other symbols of personal or cultural significance. Having the bride carry “something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue” has become a traditional observation for instance, as has including such family heirlooms as a family Bible, a chalice, or a special garment or jewelry. The important thing to remember is that each element of the ceremony must have special meaning for the two of you, in order to enhance the celebration of your marriage.

Processional:

This can be as formal as: first the mother of the bride is escorted down the aisle by the best man, then the officiant enters through a side door, followed by the ring bearer, the groom with the best man, and the ushers; then the flower girl comes down the aisle, followed by the bridesmaids, the maid of honor, and finally the bride on her father’s arm. On the other hand, the Processional can be as informal as having the officiant take the couple for a brief walk, returning when it is time to begin the ceremony. In a wedding that took place at the seashore, the guests formed a large circle while the bride and groom walked together to the edge of the water, where they performed a ritual of burning incense before entering the circle, hand in hand.

Greeting:

The officiant addresses the gathered guests, essentially welcoming them and announcing the start of the ceremony.

Invocation:

After speaking to the gathering, the officiant speaks to God in a prayer of some sort. This is intended to set the tone of the occasion and to invoke the spiritual authority that will establish the marriage. Guided relaxation imagery can be used effectively here.

Music:

Favorite or traditional songs or instrumental music can be included at various times during the ceremony, either live or pre-recorded.

Readings:

Favorite poems or other texts may be included, from brief statements to such longer pieces as the popular one from Gibran's *The Prophet*. These may be read by the officiant, members of the wedding, or the bride and groom themselves. Several examples taken from weddings are given in the next section.

Contributions:

Certain guests (or any) may be invited to contribute their own personal observations and blessings (prepared or spontaneous); this event can be thought of as a more appropriate replacement of the now anachronistic announcement that "if there be anyone present who knows why this wedding should not take place, let him speak now or forever hold his peace".

Homily:

The officiant provides a brief or extended commentary about marriage in general and this wedding in particular. Often this contains certain moral admonitions according to the couple's particular situation.

Ring or Gift Exchange:

Here the rings are given, or some other ceremonial token of the bond that is being established between husband and wife.

Personal Commitments:

The bride and groom may choose to tell one another personal affirmations of the relationship. These can be extemporaneous, or written out on cards which may themselves be exchanged afterwards.

The Vows:

Central to the ceremony, this is the recitation of specific promises to one another made by the couple. These can be the traditional statements that are recited (from memory or from written prompts), repeated after the officiant (phrase by phrase), or simply assented to after the officiant's having read them with an "I do" or an "I will". Vows may be written specifically for the occasion; the only legal requirement is that (according to state law) "the parties must declare in the presence of the person solemnizing the marriage that they take each other as husband and wife". Many examples of vows are given below.

The Pronouncement:

This is the formal acknowledgment of the marriage, which is established as the officiant states something like: "with the authority vested in me, I now pronounce you husband and wife".

Benediction:

This invokes a spiritual blessing upon the marriage, with perhaps the observation that "what God has joined let no one set asunder", or simply "God bless you both".

Recessional:

Similar to the Processional, this can be as formal, informal, or unique as desired.

The Reception Line:

The couple (or perhaps the entire wedding party) may stand in a particular location nearby to receive the congratulations and best wishes of the guests.

In addition to these elements of the ceremony, certain traditional rituals may also be included, employing water, wine, candles, or any other symbols of personal significance to the couple. Including “something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue” has become a traditional observation, as well as including a family heirloom such as a family Bible, garment, or chalice. The important thing to remember is that each element of the ceremony must have special meaning to the couple, and will enhance the celebration of their marriage.

Preparing Your Own Vows

In order to prepare for your wedding day give careful thought to the writing of your own vows, for they are the essence of the ceremony, and the sum and substance of the marriage that your wedding will establish in your community.

Begin with a journal of the relationship. Purchase one of those attractive blank books that are available in stationery stores for the purpose of personal diaries, but make this one for the two of you to share, and begin sharing it. Later you will take turns writing in the book, to air your thoughts and to respond to one another’s feelings in a more deliberate way than usually happens during spontaneous and casual conversation.

Over the weeks and months that you prepare for the wedding, a dialogue will develop in this book that can support the deepening of a caring and trusting communication; and over the years of the life you share it will become an extremely valued document that faithfully chronicles the changes as they take place in the relationship. In time this book will become sacred to your marriage, and so should never be read by any other person. Sit together at the kitchen table and write an introduction to the book. Note the date, place and circumstances that brought you together to begin it, and write reminiscences of how you had met, your first impressions of one another, and a brief history of how you came to sit together at this time to plan your marriage.

Assemble a list of things upon which you agree, and make this page (or these pages) in the book something you can add to over time. This is not to be a set of compromises that you are willing agree to, in order to share a life together, but rather a list of the similarities of beliefs and values that you have happily found you hold in common. This list can develop into a “Credo & Covenant” such as the example given below; allow the example to prompt discussion, but do not cling to its content: explore and discover your own. As you will see over the years that lie ahead, the value of such a list lies in the emotional ballast that it can provide; it will help you to navigate those areas in life that always come when you discover you disagree about something significant. It is altogether too easy to forget how much fundamental agreement there is to your relationship, and how much weather it can withstand given a temperate climate.

On separate pieces of paper begin writing down the things you are grateful for in yourself, the qualities that you take pleasure in and enjoy about yourself and the life you have lived so far. Take time to find just the right words to describe how these qualities make you feel about yourself. As each of you do this begin a similar list about the person that you have chosen to marry, in which you describe the qualities that attract you and give you pleasure. Don’t share these lists at first, let them develop thoughtfully as gifts of insight and empathy that you will soon exchange. When you are ready, they may be shared and rewritten into the book, and further developed as mutual “brags” that will further enrich your love; along with the credo they too will provide a foundation for the vows you will exchange.

The traditional wedding vows speak of a relationship “to have and to hold” in a variety of ways, as they have come to us from a variety of cultural traditions. It is good to read as many of these as you can find, especially those that come from your own heritage, so that the underlying meaning and value of what has been promised one another in the past by other couples will become evident. Again, make these examples of what is possible, and explore your own commitments, finding just the right words to articulate them.

Here it is important to remember that the word “commitment” is commonly confused with the word “obligation”; many problems that develop in marriage can be traced back to this simple and basic misunderstanding. In promising to marry, we do not obligate ourselves to one another, we commit ourselves to ourselves in the presence of one another’ respect and admiration. Our yearning to be together is not a need to be fulfilled by the other’s wonderful qualities, without which we might feel otherwise incomplete, but an eager willingness to be inspired by one another, and to improve ourselves accordingly. In brief, we are not here to teach, or to possess, but to learn and to become complete within ourselves; we are not here to change one another, but to grow in an atmosphere of loving companionship.

So what can you promise one another then? Promise to give the things about yourselves that you enjoy, which you have already written about in your book, and promise to enjoy the things about the other that attract and inspire your love. Help each other to find the words that best describe the mood with which you feel these things, and the words that best establishes that mood in the mind and heart of that person you have chosen to marry. And because these will be public vows, find the words that best tell the nature and quality of your commitment to one another so that it can be understood and nourished by the entire community of family and friends that will have gathered to witness your love.

The writing of your vows will itself become emblematic of your marriage— at once the test and proof of its eventual integrity. Enjoy the time you spend together doing it, and make of it the instrument and celebration of your love. The following was written by a couple as they prepared for their wedding; it may provide some examples to inspire you.

Credo & Covenant

(Being the Agreements and Commitments of R. D. and D. I.)

Each person nurtures the wholeness of themselves to ever increasing health and joy.

Solitude is necessary to learn about oneself (emotionally, mentally, spiritually) and to become whole, complete and centered.

It is important to be involved in creative and artistic endeavors on a regular basis. Creativity opens and strengthens one’s connection with the vital energy of life.

Curiosity is valued because it is essential to mental/emotional health and personal growth.

We will each know our own feelings and express those feelings clearly to one another.

One’s appearance is seen as a part of self expression. We enjoy playing dress-up.

We are responsible for our physical health. We are committed to regular exercise, good nutrition, regular sex, relaxation from stress and other practices that lead to a healthy mind/body/spirit.

Sexual play is a fun and exciting activity.

Eating is a pleasurable adventure, cooking food with others is a way of learning about one’s self and others. It is fun to try different combinations of flavors and textures to eat!

We will communicate with each other about our schedules and locations, keep in touch and update each other should that information change.

Each person is committed to creating for themselves intimate committed relationships beyond our relationship with each other. We recognize these are necessary to personal growth. We enjoy including our friends in our activities.

Each person holds as a sacred trust their responsibility to encourage all others in their lives toward their own personal (positive) goals [better communication, emotional sharing, creative growth, etc.]. It is better to be loving than right!

Feeling and expressing forgiveness and gratitude are recognized as vital to personal happiness and health (of individuals and of relationships).

Home is a comfortable place for both solitude and to share with our friends. Keeping our home tidy and organized to free up energy for more creative pursuits is worth putting some time into regularly.

It is important to be fiscally sound, to pay one's debts and to live within one's means. Lack of money is no excuse for not enjoying one's self.

We recognize that we are caretakers of the natural environment and responsible for the quality of air, water etc. We are able to put health of the environment before personal convenience (whenever possible conserve and re-cycle).

It is vital to be out in nature to maintain contact with the earth (and one's self).

Instead of gross American consumerist excess, our goal is to own a few useful and well maintained possessions. Quality is valued above quantity.

The government exists to provide a structure within which individuals can make free and responsible choices about their lives.

I commit myself to being close, clearing up anything in the way of my ability to do so.

I commit myself to my own development as an individual.

I commit myself to revealing myself fully in my relationships not hiding myself

I commit myself to the full empowerment of people around me.

I commit myself to acting from the awareness that I am 100% the source of my reality.

I commit myself to having a good time in my relationships.

Feel all your feelings. Tell the microscopic truth. Keep your agreements.

Exchanging the Vows of Matrimony

The following statements illustrate a variety of vows that have been exchanged, ranging from the standard and traditional to the very personal. As we have said, they may be recited by the bride and groom, with or without prompting, or they may simply be agreed to by them with an "I will" or "I do". The vows exchanged are the centerpiece of the wedding, we believe, for they embody and articulate the vision of married life that is held in common by the couple, and precisely that which they promise one another; for that reason, they bear the closest examination in the creation of the wedding ceremony.

"Richard, will you repeat these words after me? 'I, Richard, take you, Erika, to be my wife; and in so doing commit my life to you; encompassing all joys and sorrows, all triumphs and hardships, all experiences in life; a commitment made in love, kept in faith, lived in hope, and eternally made new.'" [Erika follows, reciting the same words.]

"John, repeat these words after me: 'Kathy, I give to you my love and strength, so that we may grow together in the happiness and contentment of our love.' Kathy, repeat these words after me: 'John, in giving you my love I give my total self, and yet I am not diminished, for I am strengthened by the love I give.'"

"I, Ron, take you, Shino, to be my lawful wedded wife, to love, honor and cherish, in sickness and in health, for richer and for poorer, to have and to hold, from this day forth, as long as we both shall live." [Shino recites the same lines to Ron.]

"I love you in the eternal timelessness of my authentic commitment to any future we might share, not in the permanency of any obligations that we might have instead."

[From the Book of Common Prayer, 1789:] "I, -----, take thee, -----, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, 'til death we do part, according to God's Holy Ordinance; and thereto I plight thee my troth."

[A suggested Lutheran vow, 1972:] “I, -----, take you, -----, to be my wife (husband), and these things I promise you: I will be faithful to you and honest with you; I will respect, trust, help and care for you; I will share my life with you; I will forgive you as we have been forgiven; and I will try with you better to understand ourselves, the world, and God; through the best and the worst of what is to come, as long as we live.”

“We hereby commit ourselves to sharing our lives and love with one another and joyfully proclaim ourselves a couple. We will venture forth into the sunshine and rainstorms, the lightning and rainbows, in the years ahead with kindness, commitment, compassion, and a sense of humor.”

[In one ceremony, the couple wrote their own vows and read them to one another from cards, which they then also exchanged. Then, after the ring exchange, these vows were formally acknowledged in this way:] “Jim, with this exchange of vows and rings, do you now take Kathe to be your wife?” [He says ‘I do.’] “And Kathe, with this exchange of vows and rings, do you now take Jim to be your husband?” [She says ‘I do.’]

“I promise with all my heart to be honest and faithful, to respect and honor your individuality, and to support your personal growth; to share with you my heart, my joys, my sorrows; to love you, and to be your true and lasting friend.”

“Maria, I asked you to come to this place with me today, so that we can marry, because I love you forever and everywhere: I knew this when first we met as clearly as I shall when this rich vibrant life that I promise to share with you is done.” “As a rose with all its thorns, wholly I come to thee, offering to share with you, Jim, all that I am, to share in honesty and trust, to give as well as to receive, lending support and understanding, the best that I know how; and above all, I come to you in Love.”

“I, Kathy, take you, Grant, to be my husband. I promise to love you and stay by you, in good and bad times, through happiness and sorrow, to share all that life will bring. May we grow in our faith in God, our children to come, and our love for each other. Grant, I make this commitment to you, and vow to renew it throughout our life together.” [The groom repeated the same vows.]

[Requested of the members of the families present, as vows of support:] “Will the members of the families present please stand to give their blessings to Nancy and Arthur in this new relationship? Will you support them with the freedom and love which they need? Will you share your experience and wisdom with them, and seek to learn from them as well? You may say ‘We will.’”

[In a similar manner, these responses were recited by the families of another couple:] “As your representative, I ask each of your families to stand and answer the following: Do you, the ----- family, stand with this woman to symbolize the traditions and family out of which she comes? [They respond ‘we do.’] And do you, the ----- family, stand with this man to symbolize the traditions and family out of which he comes? [They respond ‘we do.’] Will you members of the family encourage Robert and Ciele in their marriage? [They respond ‘we will.’] Do you celebrate with them the decision they have made to choose each other? [They respond ‘we do.’] Will you continue to stand beside them, yet not between? [They respond ‘we will.’] Thank you for supporting them. You may be seated.”

“Harriet, do you pledge to continue to share your life openly with Kit, to speak the truth to him in love, and to laugh after quarreling; do you promise to continue to tenderly care for him, to encourage his own fulfillment as an individual, and to foster the growth of your relationship with Kit through all the changes of your lives together?” [She says ‘I do.’] [The groom repeated these vows.]

“Carla, for your caring sensitivity, your trustworthiness and integrity, and for achieving such high aspirations, I give to you my acceptance, my sensitivity and my responsibility, from this very day forward.” “Matt, for your sensitivity and your strength, for your great optimism, and because you have accepted me as myself, I give to you my caring, my strength and support, from this very day forward.”

“I take you, -----, to be my wife (husband), and in so doing commit my life to you: encompassing all joys and sorrows, all triumphs and hardships, all experiences in life; a commitment made in love, kept in faith, lived in hope, and eternally made new.”

“In joy and in sorrow, I will always be with you. As I promised myself to you lifetimes ago, I do now. As my best friend and lover, I will walk with you throughout time, because love goes beyond time. In this way I honor you as my soul’s heart.”

A Variety of Readings

These are various things that have been included at one time or another into a wedding ceremony.

The supreme happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved, loved for ourselves, or rather, loved in spite of ourselves. [Victor Hugo]

To love is the great amulet that makes this world a garden. [Robert Louis Stevenson]

Grief can take care of itself, but to get the full value of a joy you must have somebody to divide it with. [Mark Twain]

A good relationship has a pattern like a dance, and is built on the same rules. The partners do not need to hold on tightly, because they move confidently in the same pattern, intricate but swift and free, like a country dance of Mozart’s. To touch heavily would be to arrest the pattern and freeze the movement, to check the endlessly changing beauty of its unfolding.

When you love someone you do not love that person all the time in exactly the same way, from moment to moment; that is an impossibility. And yet this is exactly what most of us demand. We have so little faith in the ebb and flow of life, of love, of relationships. We leap at the flow of the tide and resist in terror its ebb. We are afraid it will never return. We insist on permanence, on duration, on continuity; when the only continuity possible in life, as in love, is in growth, in fluidity-- in freedom, in the sense that the dancers are free, barely touching as they pass, but partners in the same pattern. [Anne M. Lindbergh]

It is therefore possible for a civilized man and woman to be happy in marriage; although if this is to be the case, a number of conditions must be fulfilled. Husbands and wives must learn to understand that, whatever the law may say, in their private lives they must be free. There must be a feeling of complete equality on both sides; there must be no interference with mutual freedom. There must be the most complete physical and mental intimacy; and there must be a certain similarity in regard to standard of values. Given all these conditions, I believe marriage to be the best and most important relation that can exist between two human beings. [Bertrand Russell]

Two persons who have chosen each other out of all the species with design to be each other’s mutual comfort and entertainment have, in that action, bound themselves to be good humored, affable, discreet, forgiving, patient, and joyful, with respect to each other’s frailties and perfections, to the end of their lives. [Joseph Addison]

I love you, not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you. I love you, not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are helping me to become. I love you for the part of me that you bring out. I love you for putting your hand into my heaped-up heart and passing over all the foolish, weak things that you can't help dimly seeing there; and for drawing out into the light all the beautiful belongings that no one else had looked quite far enough to find. I love you because you are helping to make of the lumber of my life not a tavern but a temple, and out of the works of my every day not a reproach but a song... [unknown]

In marriage, we are to be the custodians of one another's solitude. [Goethe]

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.

I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints, —I love thee with the breath,
smiles, tears of all my life! —and if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

[Elizabeth Barrett Browning]

Let us always remember the devotion we each have to that Love which brings us together, just as we cherish that spark of Light within each one of us as a reflection of the Radiance of the Universal Mind; for it is with these our acts that we might know the Acts of God. [Jim Shere]

Ruth's Entreaty [in three forms, from Ruth I, verses 16-17]:

And Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me"

Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee;
for where ever thou go, I go, and where ever thou will stay, there shall I stay as well.
Thy people shall be my own people, and thy God my own God.
Where ever thou die, there shall I die also, and there will I be buried.
The Lord has given this to me, and with this much more as well;
and nothing but death can part thee from me.

Do not ask me to leave you, or to stop following after you;
for wherever you go I will go, and wherever you stay I will also stay.
Your people are now my people, and your G•d is now my own;
where you die I shall also die, and ask to be buried beside you.
For G•d has given you to me, just as G•d has given me so much else;
and when death comes between us, even then, we will remain together.

Look to this day, for it is life-- the very life of life.
In its brief course lie
all the verities and realities of your existence:
the bliss of growth, the glory of action,
the splendor of achievement.
For yesterday is but a dream and tomorrow is only a vision;
but today, well lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness
and every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well, therefore, to this day!
Such is the salutation to the dawn.

[Sanskrit Prayer]

You were born together, and together you shall be forevermore.
You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days.
Ay, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God.
But let there be spaces in your togetherness,
And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.

Love one another, but make not a bond of love:
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.
Fill each other's cup, but drink not from one cup.
Give one another of your bread, but eat not from the same loaf.
Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone,
Even as the strings of a lute are alone, though they quiver with the same music.

Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.
And stand together, yet not too near together:
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,
And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.

[Kahlil Gibran]

I would like at this time to speak of some of the things which many of us wish for you: first, we wish for you a love that makes both of you better people by giving you a joy and zest for living, providing energy to meet the many challenges of life. We wish for you a home; not merely a place of stone and wood, but a place of sanity, serenity and security. May it serve as a sanctuary in which the values you hold most deeply are strengthened to fortify you as you move in the world at large. We wish for you a home of love and peace, filled with kindness, warmth, caring and laughter. A home that encompasses simplicity, beauty, silence and color, in harmony with the rhythms of life. We hope that you will stand by your children when they need you, and then stand aside when it is time. Finally, we wish that you will be able to say to each other: "because you have loved me, my life has been enriched." [Rabbi Charles Familliant]

I want to paint men and women with that something of the eternal which the halo used to symbolize... to express the love of two lovers by a wedding of two complementary colors, their mingling and opposition, the mysterious vibration of kindred tones. To express the thought of a brow by the radiance of a light tone against a somber background. To express hope by some star, the eagerness of a soul by a sunset radiance.

[Vincent van Gogh]

Now you will feel no rain
for each of you will be shelter to the other.
Now you will feel no cold,
for each of you will be warmth to the other.
Now there is no loneliness
for each of you will be companion to the other.
Now you are two persons,
but there is one life before you.
Go now to your dwelling place,
to enter into the days of your togetherness,
And may your days be good, and long upon the earth.

[Apache wedding blessing]

love is more thicker than forget
more thinner than recall
more seldom than a wave is wet
more frequent than to fail

it is most mad and moonly
and less it shall unbecome
than all the sea which only
is deeper than the sea

love is less always than to win
less never than alive
less bigger than the least begin
less littler than forgive

it is most sane and sunly
and more it cannot die
than all the sky which only
is higher than the sky

[e.e. cummings]

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! it is an ever-fixèd mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

If this is error, and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

[William Shakespeare]

being to timelessness as it's to time,
love did no more begin than love will end;
where nothing is to breathe to stroll to swim
love is the air the ocean and the land

(do lovers suffer?all divinities
proudly descending put on deathful flesh:
are lovers glad?only their smallest joy's
a universe emerging from a wish)

love is the voice under all silences,
the hope which has no opposite in fear;
the strength so strong mere force is feebleness;
the truth more first than sun more last than star
—do lovers love?why then to heaven with hell.
Whatever sages say and fools,all's well.

[e.e. cummings]

Here are a man and a woman, being married.
The entire world of summer lawns
holds its breath for the event. The trees
around them are lovely, displaying the small
breath and motions of August. The couple glance
at one another. Where has the moon gone,
the requisite moon? Nearby, a mother
begs her child, "Try to remember;
when did you have it last?" Oh,
impossible mystery. Where is joy
when it is not here? Time says nothing.
These things can happen, and will,
while children at the yard's border play
among grown-ups tasting the summer's wine.

Memory looks at its watch, smiling.
The moon will begin to come round
the way it always did but we'd forgotten.
The lovers touch hands and think of
some place they want to be, and go there.
The child, happy at last,
has remembered where its lost ball is.
In the garden the pink phlox and the lilies
show off, between the old moon
here in the hot sky and the one to come.
Everyone hugs or shakes hands
and walks off toward the future, waving.
The man and the woman look at each other.
They know it means happiness. They do.

[David Keller]

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say,
"I love her for her smile— her look— her way
Of speaking gently, —for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day"—
For these things in themselves, Beloved, may
Be changed, or change for thee, —and love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,—
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou mayest love on, through love's eternity.

[Elizabeth Barrett Browning]

expectation is our time
and waiting for you is best
so many evenings
flowered on the laughing sky

we are so alone
we hold hands
and even a cat is silent under a stove
and listens to how the rain falls

drops splash— those your feet
you are coming to me across gold puddles
your face is wet— I will kiss away the rain
come come
into my warm hands
into my waiting hands
into my greedy mouth
like rain

[Halina Poswiatowska]

Man and woman are like the earth, that brings forth flowers
in summer, and love, but underneath is rock.
Older than flowers, older than ferns, older than foraminiferae,
older than plasm altogether is the soul underneath.
And when, throughout all the wild chaos of love
slowly a gem forms, in the ancient, once-more molten rocks
of two human hearts, two ancient rocks, a man's heart and a woman's
that is the crystal of peace, the slow hard jewel of trust,
the sapphire of fidelity.
The gem of mutual peace emerging from the wild chaos of love.

[D H Lawrence]

..Your hands lie open in the long fresh grass,
The finger-points look through like rosy blooms:
Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and glooms
'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,
Are golden kingcup-fields with silver edge
Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn-hedge.
This visible silence, still as the hourglass.
Deep in the sun-searched growths the dragon-fly
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky:—
So this winged hour is dropped to us from above.
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,
This close-companioned inarticulate hour
When twofold silence was the song of love...

[Dante Gabriel Rossetti]

As the mirror to my hand,
the flowers to my hair,
kohl to my eyes,
tambul to my mouth,
musk to my breast,
necklace to my throat,
ecstasy to my flesh,
heart to my home—

as wing to bird,
water to fish,
life to the living—
so you to me.

But tell me,
Makhava, beloved,
who are you?
Who are you really?

Vidyapati says, they are one another.

[Vidyapati, Hindu love poem, translation by Edward C. Dimock, Jr., and Denise Levertov]

This marriage be wine with halvah, honey dissolving in milk.
This marriage be the leaves and fruit of a date tree.
This marriage be women laughing together for days on end.
This marriage, a sign for us to study.
This marriage, beauty.
This marriage, a moon in a light-blue sky.
This marriage, this silence fully mixed with spirit.

[Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks with A.J. Arberry]

We have taken the seven steps. You have become mine forever.

Yes, we have become partners. I have become yours. Hereafter, I cannot live without you. Do not live without me. Let us share the joys. We are work and meaning, united. You are thought and I am sound.

May the nights be honey-sweet for us; may the mornings be honey-sweet for us; may the earth be honey-sweet for us, may the heavens be honey-sweet for us.

May the plants be honey-sweet for us; may the sun be all honey for us; may the cows yield us honey-sweet milk!

As the heavens are stable, as the earth is stable, as the mountains are stable, as the whole universe is stable, so may our union be permanently settled.

[From the Hindu marriage ritual of "Seven Steps".]

Is it for now or for always
The world hangs on a stalk?
Is it a trick or a trysting place,
The woods we have found to walk?
Is it a mirage or a miracle,
Your lips that lift at mine;
And the suns like a juggler's juggling balls,
Are they a sham or a sign?

Shine out, my sudden angel,
Break fear with breast and brow,
I take you now and for always,
For always is always now.

[Philip Larkin]

For one human being to love another human being: that is perhaps the most difficult task that has been entrusted to us, the ultimate task, the final test and proof, the work for which all other work is merely preparation. Loving does not at first mean merging, surrendering, and uniting with another person— it is a high inducement for the individual to ripen, to become something in herself, to become world, to become world in herself for the sake of another person: it is a great, demanding claim on her, something that chooses her and calls her to vast distances...

Now there are girls and women whose name no longer mean the mere opposite of the male, but something in itself, something that makes one think not of any complement, but only of life and reality: the female human being.

This advance has transformed the love experience, which was filled with error, has changed it from the ground up, and reshaped it into a relationship that is meant to be between one human being and another, no longer one that flows from man to woman. And this more human love (which fulfills itself with infinite consideration and gentleness, and kindness and clarity in binding and releasing) resembles what we are now preparing painfully and with great struggle: the love that consists in this: that two solitudes protect and border and greet each other...

Once the realization is accepted that even between the closest people infinite distances exist, a marvelous living side-by-side can grow up for them, if they succeed in loving the expanse between them, which gives them the possibility of always seeing each other as a whole and before an immense sky...

Life is self-transformation, and human relationships, which are an extract of life, are the most changeable of all, they rise and fall from minute to minute, and lovers are those for whom no moment is like any other. People between whom nothing habitual ever takes place, nothing that has already existed, but just what is new, unexpected, unprecedented. There are such connections, which must be a very great, an almost unbearable happiness, but they can occur only between very rich beings, between those who have become, each for her own

sake, rich, calm, and concentrated; only if two worlds are wide and deep and individual can they be combined... So those who love must try to act as if they had a great work to accomplish: they must be much alone and go into themselves and gather and concentrate themselves; they must work; they must become something.

For the more we are, the richer everything we experience is. And those who want to have a deep love in their lives must collect and save for it, and gather honey.

[Rainer Maria Rilke]

No speed of wind or water rushing by
But you have speed far greater. You can climb
Back up a stream of radiance to the sky,
And back through history up the stream of time.
And you were given this swiftness, not for haste
Nor chiefly that you may go where you will,
But in the rush of everything to waste,
That you may have the power of standing still—
Off any still or moving thing you say.
Two such as you with such a master speed
Cannot be parted nor be swept away
From one another once you are agreed
That life is only life forevermore
Together wing to wing and oar to oar.

[Robert Frost]

The meaning of marriage begins in the giving of words. We cannot join ourselves to one another without giving our word. And this must be an unconditional giving, for in joining ourselves to one another we join ourselves to the unknown... You do not know the road; you have committed your life to a way... The faith... is that by staying, and only by staying, we will learn something of the truth, that the truth is good to know, and that it is always both different and larger than we thought.

[Wendell Berry]

And now let us raise the wedding canopy. The wedding canopy is a representation of the future home at such a time as this, when we promise one another everything. For most of us, it is raised only once in a lifetime, in indication of our hopes and dreams; it in itself is not permanent, but it is the promise of a home, just as the wedding-day, though it seem so brief, contains the promise of a marriage that will endure. The openness of the canopy reminds us there can be no secrets, and that the hopes and promises you have brought to this day will not keep out weather and catastrophe. Yet these few lines are a sketch for what might be. The man and the woman have left the wilderness of their loneliness; they have come from very far away to be together here. The fragile vulnerability of the canopy that shelters you here is to remind you that the only thing that is real about a home is the people— the people within the home, who recognize how far they have each come to be together as a family, and the people of their community, who support their home. As they grasp the corners of your canopy, hold one another's hands: these human connections are the only true anchors that you will have in this wayward world. This wedding canopy is your house of promises, and your home of hope.

[Adapted from *The Succah and the Huppah* by Debra Cash.]

I would have each couple turn,
join and unjoin, be lost
in the greater turning of other couples, woven
in the circle of a dance,
the song of long time flowing
over them, so they may return,
turn again in to themselves
out of desire greater than their own,
belonging to all, to each,
to the dance, and to the song
that moves them through the night.

What is fidelity? To what
does it hold? The point
of departure, or the turning road
that is departure and absence
and the way home? What we are
and what we were once
are far estranged. For those
who would not change, time
is infidelity. But we are married
until death, and are betrothed
to change. By silence, so,
I learn my song. I earn
my sunny fields of absence, once
and to come. And I love you
as I love the dance that brings you
out of the multitude
in which you come and go.
Love changes, and in change is true.

[Wendell Berry]

When one human being is attached to another by a bond of affection that contains any degree of necessity, it is impossible that she should wish autonomy to be preserved both in herself and in the other. Impossible by virtue of the mechanism of nature. But possible by the miraculous intervention of the supernatural. This miracle is friendship... Friendship is the miracle by which one human being consents to view from a distance, and without coming nearer, the very being who is as necessary to her as food... Through this supernatural power of respect for human autonomy, friendship is very similar to the pure forms of compassion and gratitude aroused by affliction. In both cases the opposites that are the terms of the harmony are necessity and freedom, or in other words subordination and equality. These two pairs of opposites are equivalent... Friendship has something universal about it. It consists in loving a human being as we would like to be able to love every particular one of those who make up the human race... Pure friendship is an image of the original and perfect friendship that is the very essence of God. It is impossible for two human beings to be one while scrupulously respecting the distance that separates them, unless God is present in each of them. The point where parallels meet is infinity.

[Simone Weil, translated by Stephen Mitchell]

How pure the hearts of lovers as they walk
Through the rich quiet fields
Where the stiff wheat grows heavy on the stalk
And over barley and its paler golds
The air is bright—

They do not even walk yet hand in hand,
But every sense is pricked alive so sharp
That life breathes through them from the burning land
And they could use the wind itself for harp,
And oh, to drink the light!

Now all around them earth moves toward an end,
The gold turning to bronze, the barley tassled,
The fruit stored up, and soon the sheaves will bend
Their heads together in the rich wedding-bed
All are about to enter.

The hearts of lovers as they walk, how pure;
How cool the wind upon the open palm
As they move on toward harvest, and so sure
Even this ripening has a marvelous calm
And a still center.

[May Sarton]

The Seven Traditional Blessings of Judaism [in three forms]:

You Abound in Blessings, Adonai our God, who creates the fruit of the vine.
Holy One of Blessing Your Presence fills creation, forming the fruit of the vine.
We acknowledge the Unity of all, expressing our appreciation for this wine, symbol and aid of our rejoicing.

You Abound in Blessings, Adonai our God, You created all things for Your glory.
Holy One of Blessing Your Presence fills creation, as all creation reflects your splendor.
We acknowledge the Unity of all, realizing that each separate moment and every distinct object points to and shares in this oneness.

You Abound in Blessings, Adonai our God, You made humankind in Your image, after your likeness, and You prepared from us a perpetual relationship. You Abound in Blessings, Adonai our God, you created humanity.

...

Holy One of Blessing Your Presence fills creation, giving life to each human being.
Holy One of Blessing Your Presence fills creation, you created man and woman in Your image, each reflecting the image of God for the other forever. Holy One of Blessing, You give life to every being.
We acknowledge the Unity of all, recognizing and appreciating the blessing of being human.

May she who was barren rejoice when her children are united in her midst in joy. You Abound in Blessings, Adonai our God, who makes Zion rejoice with her children.
How happy is she who thought herself childless and then finds that her children gather to rejoice within her. Holy

One of Blessing, You make Zion happy with her children.

You make these beloved companions greatly rejoice even as You rejoiced in Your creation in the Garden of Eden as of old. You Abound in Blessings, Adonai our God, who makes the bridegroom and bride to rejoice.

May these cherished friends rejoice in joy as You once rejoiced in Your creation of Gan Eden.

...

Holy One of Blessing, Your presence radiates joy for the bride and groom.

You Abound in Blessings, Adonai our God, who created joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride, mirth and exultation, pleasure and delight, love, fellowship, peace, and friendship.

Soon may there be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of joy and gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the jubilant voice of bridegrooms from their canopies and of youths from their feasts of song.

You Abound in Blessings, Adonai our God, you make the bridegroom rejoice with the bride.

Holy One of Blessing, Your presence fills creation, You created joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride, delight, song, laughter and gaiety, love and harmony, peace and friendship. May all Israel soon ring with voices of gladness and joy, voices of bridegrooms and brides, voices raised in joyful wedding celebrations, voices lifted in festive singing. Holy One of Blessing, Your Presence radiates for the bride and groom.

I have long puzzled over the many reasons that are given for the breaking of a glass at the close of the traditional Jewish ceremony. Some have said it refers to Moses' breaking of the ten commandments that had been carved in stone, in anger at the Israelites; others are reminded of the destruction of Solomon's Temple. In either case, it seems a doleful warning against having too much fun when the situation is serious. There does seem something paradoxical about the way a broken glass can represent permanence, for once it is broken it is permanently so, and cannot then be unbroken. I think of Blakes' poem:

He who binds to himself a joy
Does the winged life destroy;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sun rise.

...which indicates my own preference for eternity over permanence. Buddhism provides a similar teaching in the following anecdote by the Venerable Achaan Chah Subato: "One day some people came to the master and asked: How can you be happy in a world of such impermanence, where you cannot protect your loved ones from harm, illness and death? The master held up a glass and said: Someone gave me this glass, and I really like this glass. It holds my water admirably and it glistens in the sunlight. I touch it and it rings! One day the wind may blow it off the shelf, or my elbow may knock it from the table. I know this glass is already broken, so I enjoy it incredibly." [Jim Shere]

The Epistle of St. Paul [I Corinthians 13, in three forms]:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be

tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

...

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am as a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

...

Whether I am a being of this planet or a being of light— if I do not have love I am simply a noisy, empty instrument. And though I may have the gift of insight and understand all mysteries and all knowledges, and though I may have enough faith to move entire mountains, still— if I do not have love, I have nothing. And though I may give away everything that I own, and have this body burned to ash after I have died, still— if I do not have love these gestures of modest generosity give me nothing. Love is patient and kind, and is not envious. Love is neither proud nor pretentious, but rather discreet, looking for inspiration rather than approval. Love is not easily saddened, or frightened, or angered, and does not think in terms of what is right and wrong, but rather in terms of what is real and true. Love recognizes all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and allows all things. Love never fails, while opinions will always fail. For words are always inadequate, and knowledge is only temporary, as long as we can only see and speak about our little part of the entirety. When we finally learn about the complete and perfect wholeness that embraces to include everything, then we will finally come to know how little we ever knew. When I was a child I thought as a child, and I spoke as a child; but when I became grown, I put my childishness away. Now we see through a glass, darkly; then, we will see things face to face. Now, we know only a part, but then, we will know it all— including ourselves, and so we can become known. Now we have faith, hope, and love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Some say there are two forces that make up this physical universe in which we live: gravity and movement; just so, two forces within the human condition make it possible to be here: love and growth. Love, like gravity, attracts us to one another, brings people into an orbits that enfold us into systems called families, communities, and societies. Growth, like movement, is the radiance that tests the integrity of the fabric of these circles of love, stretching them by the challenging experiences of the human condition— sometimes painfully, sometimes dangerously, but always and inevitably with reason, and with meaning. May each of you, throughout your days together, support the other in loving growth, through growing love. [Jim Shere]

Husband and wife are like the two equal parts of a soybean. If the two parts are put under the earth separately, they will not grow. The soybean will grow only when when the parts are covered by the skin. Marriage is the skin which covers each of them and makes them one. [Hari Das]

Love is, above all, the gift of oneself. [Jean Anouilh]

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love,
And feed His sacred flame.

[Coleridge]

How wise are they that are but fools in love! [Joshua Cooke]

We are all born for love... it is the principle of existence and its only end. [Disraeli]

Love is a conflict between reflexes and reflections [Magnus Hirschfeld]

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear. [I John IV. 18]

He who loves not wine, woman, and song,
Remains a fool his whole life long. [attributed to Martin Luther]

Love is the fulfilling of the law. [Romans XIII. 10]

Love in its essence is spiritual fire. [Swedenborg]
People talk about love as if it were something you could give, like an armful of flowers.
[Anne Morrow Lindbergh]

Our own heart always exceeds us. [Rainer Maria Rilke]

Love that stammers, that stutters, is apt to be the love that loves best. [Gabriela Mistral]

Can one ever remember love? It's like trying to summon up the smell of roses in a cellar. You might see a rose, but never the perfume. [Arthur Miller]

There are never enough "I love you"s. [Lenny Bruce]

Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all of the barriers within yourself that you have built against it. [A Course in Miracles]

It is only necessary to know that love is a direction and not a state of the soul. If one is unaware of this, one falls into despair at the first onslaught of affliction. [Simone Weil]

A man doesn't learn to understand anything unless he loves it. [Johann Wolfgang von Goethe]

God is love. His plan for creation can only be rooted on love. Does not that simple thought, rather than erudite reasonings, offer solace to the human heart? [Paramahansa Yogananda]

It is only by feeling your love that the poor will forgive you for the gifts of bread. [St. Vincent de Paul]

Take away love and our earth is a tomb. [Robert Browning]

You want to be loved because you do not love; but the moment you love, it is finished, you are no longer inquiring whether or not somebody love you. [J. Krishnamurti]

If the seed is not subjected to heat and humidity, it becomes useless. Cold contracts the heart and dryness hardens it, but the fire of divine love dilates it, and the water of intelligence dissolves the residue. [Henry Madathanas]

God is Love. And Love must love. And to love there must be a Beloved. But since God is Existence infinite and eternal there is no one for Him to love but Himself. And in order to love Himself He must imagine Himself as the Beloved whom He as the Lover imagines He loves. Beloved and Lover implies separation. And separation creates longing; and longing causes search. And the wider and the more intense the search the greater the separation and the more terrible the longing. When longing is most intense separation is complete, and the purpose of separation, which was that Love might experience itself as Lover and Beloved, is fulfilled; and union follows. And when union is attained, the Lover knows that he himself was all along the Beloved whom he loved and desired union with; and that all the impossible situations that he overcame were obstacles which he himself had placed in the path to himself. To attain union is so impossibly difficult because it is impossible to become what you already are! Union is nothing other than knowledge of oneself as the Only One. [Meher Baba]

Love tells me I am everything. Wisdom tells me I am nothing. And between the two my life flows.
[Sri Nisargadatta]

O Belovèd, how óften háve I fóund mysèlf to bé appréntic'd to your compássionate lóve of mé?
[Jim Shere]

When I asked about his relationship with Saint Claire, Saint Francis replied: "I can be as I am with her because I must be alone with God, and in her presence I find myself alone with God. For all women can bring you to God, easily; and as easily most can bring you away as well. But those women such as Claire will choose to remain with you, with Him." [Jim Shere]

When you have guided your Belovèd safely across the River,
you too will have arrived at the Opposite Shore. [Jim Shere]

Let no one believe that he has received the divine kiss, if he knows the truth without loving it or loves it without understanding it. But blessed is that kiss whereby not only is God recognized but also the Father is loved: for there is never full knowledge without perfect love. [St. Bernard]

Undisciplined love dwells in the senses for it is still entangled with earthly things... Disciplined love lives in the soul and rises above the human senses and forbids the body its own will. It is modest and very still. It folds its wings and listens to an unspeakable voice and gazes into incomprehensible light and seeks eagerly the will of its Lord. [Mechtild of Magdeburg]

Love is the astrolabe of the mysteries of God. [Rumi]

Lo, verily, not for love of all is all dear, but for love of the Self all is dear. [Upanishad]

Lover, Beloved and Love am I in one,
Beauty and Mirror and the Eyes which see. [Abu Sa'id ibn Abi 'l-Khayr]

Love that ends is the shadow of love; true love is without beginning or end. [Hazrat Inayat Khan]

Love is all fire; and so heaven and hell are the same place. [Norman O. Brown]

Whoever loves true life, will love true love. [Elizabeth Barrett Browning]

My love is my weight. [St. Augustine]

Marriage is half the tradition... the other half is patience. [Muhammad]

Supreme happiness lies in wanting to keep another person safe and warm and happy, and being privileged to try. [Robert Heinlein, "Time Enough for Love"]

Part Two: We Did

[The following eighteen wedding ceremonies appear with the understanding that they will not be further reproduced without the express permission of the participants, in respect for their privacy.]

Dan and Cathy

Processional:

[While Bob escorts Dan's mother, Ann, to her seat during the introductory music, Audrey escorts Dan's father. They then light the candles and take their seats. Meanwhile, the members of the groom's party take their places from the side in the following way: first the minister enters, followed by Dan and John, and then the ushers, Steve and Jim. the minister then announces: "In place of the traditional wedding march, Cathy has chosen this song for Dan." Then Pamela and Jeff begin singing "I'll Always Love You" by Taylor Dane, while the bridesmaids Liz, Denny, and Darla come down the aisle, followed by the maid of honor, Kathy, and finally Cathy, escorted by Bruce. Dan steps forward to shake hands with Bruce, who then takes his place with the other ushers while Dan escorts Cathy to stand before the minister.]

Greeting:

"Cathy and Dan have honored us by inviting us to be with them on this very special day, their wedding day. What Cathy and Dan mean to each other may seem obvious to us by the vows they take today; still, it is not completely expressed by a ceremony such as this: may that love continue to be more fully expressed each day from now. Let us pray, and ask God to be with us on this special day."

Invocation:

"Lord, as clearly as we know Your Presence now, we ask that it be known throughout the time shared by these two, from this day forward. Attend them with Your Grace, protect them with your Mighty Power, and guide them with your Love."

Homily:

"Love is the greatest experience we people may have; it can add a depth of meaning that matches the highest aspirations of our lives. A marriage such as this we celebrate this day; it inaugurates and symbolizes the intimate sharing of two lives in one love. And yet, this sharing must enhance and not diminish the individuality of each partner. Sharing love requires great strength. To live in love is life's greatest challenge, for it requires more constant trust, sensitivity, and respect than any other human endeavor. A marriage that lasts is one that is continually developing and growing in the nourishing, caring, and understanding of each one for the other. Deep knowledge of one another is not something achieved in a brief time, and real understanding of one another's feelings can develop fully only with years of intimacy. This wonderful knowledge grows out of caring for the other with the desire to understand as completely as possible what the other is thinking and feeling. To know and to be known in this way is the priceless gift that we call love. To love one another, you must first love yourselves; for you can only give to others what you have first given to yourself, and this is especially true of love. Since love is not a thing,

it is not diminished when it is given. You can offer your love completely, and still retain as much love as that with which you originally began. Rather than saying 'love is given to one another', it would be better to say 'love is shared in the giving and in the receiving'. These two people each know this love, and, with God as their witness, ask to share this love in one another's life."

Candle Ceremony:

"Cathy and Dan have expressed a hope that their marriage will be as loving and forgiving as the love shared by Dan's parents, Ann and Jim. They have given Cathy and Dan a wonderful gift by setting the example of a marriage that is caring, understanding, affectionate, and unselfish, a marriage that continues to grow and develop through the years. We all know how very difficult this is to do. It would be well in a ceremony such as this to honor couples that make their marriage work this well; and so we would be honored to have Ann and Jim join us at this time." [Dan's father stands next to Cathy and Dan's Mother next to Dan.]

"Dear Lord, by the lighting of these candles may you give to Cathy and Dan the knowledge and strength to keep their marriage sacred; may you watch over them and guide them, helping them through any difficulties that may arise in their marriage." [While "With You I Am Born Again" is sung, Dan's parents each light a candle at the candelabra, and then hand the candles to Dan and Cathy, who then light a single unity candle together.] "By the lighting of these candles, may Ann and Jim share their knowledge, strength and love with Cathy and Dan." [Parents are seated.]

Ring Exchange:

"Do you have the rings?" [John gives the ring to Dan while Cathy gives her flowers to Kathy.] "As tokens of the vows you are making today, these rings that each of you give symbolize the complete love and commitment that you have for one another. Let wearing them always be a reminder of this." [Dan puts the ring on Cathy's finger. Cathy then takes the other ring from Kathy and puts it on Dan's finger.]

Vows:

"Dan, do you take Cathy to be your lawful wedded wife, to have and to hold, for better and for worse, for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, honor, and cherish, from this day forward? [He says "I do."] And Cathy, do you take Dan to be your lawful wedded husband, to have and to hold, for better and for worse, for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, honor, and cherish, from this day forward?" [She says "I do."]

Pronouncement and Benediction:

"Then with the power vested in me, I do witness and affirm your union of love, and pronounce you husband and wife. God bless you both. [To Dan:] You may now kiss your bride. [To the guests:] Ladies and gentlemen, I now present to you: Mr. and Mrs Daniel and Catherine —."

Recessional:

"Tonight I Celebrate My Love" by Roberta Flack is sung by Pam and Jeff while Cathy and Dan go up the aisle, followed by Denny with Jim, Darla with Bruce, and Liz with Steve, who are then followed by the minister, while John, the best man, escorts Dan's mother, Kathy, the maid of honor, escorts Dan's father, and Bob escorts his grandmother, a signal for the guests to exit as well.

William and Aimee

Processional:

[This wedding took place on the brow of a hill overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The guests and wedding party climbed to this spot together, and while the guests prepared themselves William and Aimee went for a brief walk. As they returned, the wedding ceremony began.]

Greeting:

“We are gathered here today to participate in the marriage ceremony of Bill and Aimee, and to celebrate their love. You were asked to participate because Bill and Aimee love you, and want to share their love with you.” [Bill and Aimee arrive.]

Invocation:

“Our God of Spirit in Nature: we who stand here on this mountain number ourselves among your tall trees; our roots plough deeply into Mother Earth, our branches comb out Father Sky. We know that You have always moved forever and relentless within us and among us, with enthusiasm, with passion; we ask also to know that You will always thus carry us forward in this, Your Way of Life and Path of Love.”

Homily:

“Marriage is a special way of being together, of sharing life and love to the breadth and depth your hearts can hold. Marriage is a joyous time to recognize that you are an extension of Divine Light-- a spark of God. Living within this context allows one to pass by the personalities of misunderstandings. It allows one to let his or her actions be of a truly loving nature.”

Readings:

[Pierette reads from The Prophet by Gibran, then Bill L. reads “Imagine” by John Lennon.]

Personal Commitments:

[Aimee recites to Bill:] “Let me count the ways how I love you: it’s like the gentle wind you feel at dawn, it’s like that first sun that hits the dew, it’s like that cloud with a gold lining telling us softly that it’ll be a good day for us. Thank you.”

[Bill recites to Aimee:] “Grow old along with me; the best is yet to be. Spending our lives together, man and wife together, whatever fate decrees, we will see it through, for our love is true. God bless our love.”

The Vows:

[First Aimee, then Bill recites:] “I promise with all my heart to be honest and faithful, to respect and honor your individuality, to support your spiritual growth, to love you, and to be your true and lasting friend.”

[The minister then says to the gathered guests:] “And will you, friends and family, acknowledge and support this marriage? You may say ‘we do’.”

Ring Exchange:

“Do you have the rings? These rings that you give each other today stand as symbols of the complete yet endless perfection of your relationship. Let wearing them always be a reminder of this. [To Bill:] Bill, take Aimee’s left hand with yours, and place this ring you give her on her hand, but only to the first knuckle: in this way you place your offer of marriage in her hands. [To Aimee:] And Aimee, bring this ring to its rightful place, thus signaling that you accept Bill’s offer, and marry yourself to him. Now take this ring that you give Bill and place it on his hand, but again only to the first knuckle: in this way you place your offer of marriage in his hands. [To Bill:]

And Bill, bring this ring to its rightful place, thus signalling that you accept Aimee’s offer, and marry yourself to her.”

Pronouncement and Benediction:

“And so, with the power vested in me, I do witness and affirm your union of love, and pronounce you husband and wife. God bless you both.”

Robert and Patricia

Processional:

[This very simple ceremony took place in their apartment, with only their immediate family members present.]

Greeting:

“Bob and Trisha have asked you to be here today to take part in this wedding, because this is how they want to start their married life together, in the presence of their family.

Homily:

“Marriage is a special way of being together, of sharing love and life each day. When you marry, in a sense, you are committing your future to each other. Do this with wisdom, and with love. Speak kind and loving words to each other every day, and nurture each other’s spirit, so that you can grow— together.”

Vows:

“Bob: do you take Trisha to be your wife, to share your life with, from this day on? (He says “I do.”)

“Trisha: do you take Bob to be your husband, to share your life with, from this day on? (She says “I do.”)

Ring Exchange:

“These rings that you give one another stand as symbols of the complete yet endless perfection of your relationship. Let wearing them always be a reminder of this.

Pronouncement:

“With the power vested in me, I do witness and affirm your union of love, and pronounce you husband and wife. You may now kiss the bride.”

Eric and Pam

Processional:

Pam and Eric descend the stairway into the livingroom and join the guests and the minister when they are ready to perform the ceremony. A table has been prepared with the rings, the written vows, a pitcher of water, and a special goblet.]

Greeting:

“Pam and Eric have asked you to be here today, to take part in this wedding, because this is how they want to start their married life together, in the presence of their most special friends and family.”

Invocation:

“Lord, as clearly as we know Your Presence now, we ask that it be known throughout the time shared by these two. Attend them with Your Grace, protect them with your Mighty Power, and guide them with your Love.”

Readings:

“Pam and Eric have chosen readings by Victor Hugo and Anne Morrow Lindbergh, together with a third whose source is unknown, to be included in this celebration:”

[the minister:] “The supreme happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved, loved for ourselves, or rather, loved in spite of ourselves.”

[Eric:] “A good relationship has a pattern like a dance, and is built on the same rules. The partners do not need to hold on tightly, because they move confidently in the same pattern, intricate but swift and free, like a country dance of Mozart’s.”

[Pam:] “To touch heavily would be to arrest the pattern and freeze the movement, to check the endlessly changing beauty of its unfolding.”

[Eric:] “When you love someone, you do not love that person all the time in exactly the same way, from moment to moment; that is an impossibility.”

[Pam:] “And yet this is exactly what most of us demand. We have so little faith in the ebb and flow of life, of love, of relationships. We leap at the flow of the tide and resist in terror its ebb.”

[Eric:] “We are afraid it will never return. We insist on permanence, on duration, on continuity; when the only continuity possible in life, as in love, is in growth, in fluidity—”

[Pam:] “—in freedom, in the sense that the dancers are free, barely touching as they pass, but partners in the same pattern.”

[Eric:] “I love you, not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you.”

[Pam:] “I love you, not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are helping me to become.”

[Eric:] “I love you for the part of me that you bring out. I love you for putting your hand into my heaped-up heart and passing over all the foolish, weak things that you can’t help dimly seeing there; and for drawing out into the light all the beautiful belongings that no one else had looked quite far enough to find.”

[Pam:] “I love you because you are helping to make of the lumber of my life not a tavern but a temple, and out of the works of my every day not a reproach but a song...”

Contributions:

“At this time, any of you who choose to may speak to Pam and Eric, including your own spontaneous observations and blessings with their wedding.” [These contributions conclude with the following poem, written by the minister for Pam and Eric:]

Don’t fall in love with only her or him,
but with your entire world and life;
and love that one you share them with,
as husband, or as wife.

Homily:

“Marriage is a special way of being together, of sharing life and love to the breadth and depth your hearts can hold. But to love one another, we must first love our own selves; for we can only give to others what we have first given to ourselves, and this is especially true of love. To know, and to be known, in this way may require great strength, but it provides as well great joy. For, since love is not a thing, it is not diminished when it is given; indeed, it flourishes by the sharing.

“Courage is a wonderful word, and it has a special meaning here, for it comes from the Old French word for heart. In the time that I have come to know these two people, Pam and Eric, I have come to recognize in them the courage to know life uncompromisingly, each in his or her own way, and the courage to discover in that life this kind of undiminished love, and the courage to ask to share this love in one another’s life. Let Heartfelt Courage then become the emblem of these days that you will share.”

Personal Commitments:

[Pam and Eric tell one another spontaneous personal affirmations of their relationship.]

Water Ritual:

“This marriage is such a reservoir, that we may each pour into it the love we have to give, and that we may each draw from it the love we need. May these waters be always as pure as they are today.” [Eric then pours water from a pitcher into a goblet, and gives it to Pam to drink; she in turn refills the goblet with water from the pitcher, and gives it to Eric to drink.]

Music:

“Just the Way You Are”, by Billy Joel.

Vows:

[Eric recites to Pam:] “Pam, I give to you my love and strength, so that we may grow together in the happiness and contentment of our love. I promise with all my heart to be honest and faithful, to respect and honor your individuality, and to support your personal growth; I promise to share with you my heart, my joys, and my sorrows, to love you, and to be your true and lasting friend. This commitment is made in love, kept in faith, lived in hope, and eternally made new. I love you.”

[Pam recites to Eric:] “Eric, I give to you my love and strength, so that we may grow together in the happiness and contentment of our love. I promise with all my heart to be honest and faithful, to respect and honor your individuality, and to support your personal growth; I promise to share with you my heart, my joys, and my sorrows, to love you, and to be your true and lasting friend. This commitment is made in love, kept in faith, lived in hope, and eternally made new. I love you.”

[The minister then requests of the guests present, as vows of support:] “And will you, who have gathered here, support Pam and Eric with the freedom and love which they need? Will you share your experience and wisdom with them, and seek to learn from them as well? You may say ‘We will.’”

Ring Exchange:

“As tokens of the vows you are making today, these rings that you give one another symbolize the complete love and commitment that you have for one another. Let wearing them always be a reminder of this.” [Eric places his ring on Pam’s hand, and then she places her ring on his.]

Pronouncement and Benediction:

“Then with the power vested in me, I do witness and affirm your union of love, and pronounce you husband and wife. God bless you both. [To Eric:] You may now kiss your bride.”

Recessional:

[When Pam and Eric are ready, the guests are encouraged to approach and offer their congratulations.]

Daniel and Patricia

Processional:

[After the guests have been seated, the mother of the bride (who has been cloistered with her daughter) is escorted down the aisle to her seat by Matt, the groom's brother and best man. The minister then enters from the side, followed by Dan and Matt. The music for the bride's processional is begun, as Chris, the matron of honor, walks down the aisle, followed by Patricia on the arm of her father, Bob. As they approach the front, Dan steps forward to meet them and shakes her father's hand, before escorting Patricia to stand before the minister.]

Greeting and Invocation:

"Patricia and Dan have asked us to be with them to celebrate this day of their wedding. They have based this ceremony of their marriage upon the words of Wendell Berry, and we begin with this invocation:

True harvests no mere intent may reap.
Finally we must lie down to sleep
And leave the world, all we desire
To darkness, malevolence, and fire.
Who wakes and stands his shadow's mark
Has passed by mercy through the dark.
We save the good, lovely, and bright
By will in part, in part delight;
But they live through the night by grace
That no intention can efface.

Homily:

"Marriage is the basic and central community tie; it begins and stands for the relation we have to family and to the larger circles of human association, which, in turn, stand within Nature. Just so, our relation to the human community and to creation is basic to, and may stand for, our relationship to God-- or to the sustaining mysteries and powers of creation.

"These relationships stand within a cycle of renewal: renewal of season, fertility, love, faith. And renewal is always accompanied by loss and change. In order for renewal to take place, the old must not be forgotten, but relinquished; in order to become what we may be, we must cease to be as we are; in order to have life, we must lose it.

"Marriage then is as solemn, demanding and blessed as our relationship to our place in the world. It should be respected as one respects the mysteries and transcendent powers. Loyalty, devotion, faith, dignity, generosity are not ethereal virtues, but the concrete terms upon which the possibility of love is kept alive in the world.

"There will never come an age of benefit without responsibility. When the metaphor of atonement ceases to live in our consciousness, we lose the means of relationship. We become isolated in ourselves, and our behavior be-

comes that of people without bonds or limits. Though the forms of marriage may change, it can only continue to exist through the same sustaining disciplines, and to incorporate the same tragic awareness: that it is made “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, ’til death...”

“It would be a mistake to imply that two lives can unite and make a life between them without discord and pain. Marriage is a perilous and fearful effort. There can’t be enough knowledge at the beginning. It must endure the blundering of ignorance. It is both the cause and the effect of what happens to it. It creates pain that it is the only cure for. It is the only comfort for its hardships. To read a poem from Country of Marriage, by Wendell Berry :

Sometimes our life reminds me
of a forest in which there is a graceful clearing
and in that opening a house,
an orchard and garden,
comfortable shades and flowers
red and yellow in the sun, a pattern
made in the light for the light to return to.
The forest is mostly dark, its ways
to be made anew day after day, the dark
richer than the light and more blessed
provided we stay brave
enough to keep on going in.

Ring Exchange:

“Do you have the rings? [Matt gives the ring to Dan while Patricia gives her flowers to Chris.] As tokens of the vows you are making today, these rings that each of you give symbolize the love and commitment that you have for one another. Let wearing them always be a reminder of this.” [Dan puts the ring on Patricia’s finger. Patricia then takes the other ring from Chris and puts it on Dan’s finger.]

Vows:

“Dan, will you repeat these words to Patricia, after me? ‘I, Dan, do take you, Patricia... to be my lawful wedded wife... to have and to hold... for better, for worse... for richer, for poorer... in sickness and in health... from this day forward... ’till death do us part.’ And Patricia, will you repeat these words to Dan, after me? ‘I, Patricia, do take you, Dan... to be my lawful wedded husband... to have and to hold... for better, for worse... for richer, for poorer... in sickness and in health... from this day forward... ’till death do us part.’”

Pronouncement and Benediction:

“Then with the power vested in me, I do witness and affirm your union of love, and pronounce you husband and wife. God bless you both. [To Dan:] You may now kiss your bride.”

Recessional:

Patricia leaves with Dan, and Chris with Matt, followed by the minister, the parents, and the guests.]

James and Judith

Processional:

[The parents are escorted to their seats by the maid of honor, Norah, and the best man, John. The minister then enters from the side with James and John. As the music is changed to announce their entrance, Norah precedes

Judith down the aisle. When Norah has arrived at the front, James walks up the aisle to meet and escort Judith the rest of the way.]

Greeting:

“James and Judith have honored us by inviting us to be with them on this very special day, their wedding day. What James and Judith mean to each other may seem obvious to us by the vows they take today; still, it is not completely expressed by a ceremony such as this: may that love continue to be more fully expressed each day from now. Let us pray, and ask God to be with us on this special day.”

Invocation:

“Lord, as clearly as we know Your Presence now, we ask that it be known throughout the time shared by these two, from this day forward. Attend them with Your Grace, protect them with your Mighty Power, and guide them with your Love.”

Homily:

“Marriage is a special way of being together, of sharing life and love to the breadth and depth your hearts can hold. A good marriage— such as this one you have so consciously, so intentionally chosen— is labor intensive, yes; but intensively it is a labor of love. Let the passion of this love proclaim and celebrate a love for each of you as much as for one another, and give to yourselves a good life, in a good home, as much as you give it to one another.

“You have already learned that there was never as much distance between you as there was you each had to travel in order to know how close you have always been. Continue to enjoy yourselves thoroughly in the presence of one another, as you continue to challenge yourselves in the encounter and unconditional confrontation of this matrimony. Allow the ferment of its frank intimacy to become a reservoir of dangerous vitality, for— to paraphrase The Gnostic Gospel of Thomas— “That which you have within you will save you, if you bring it forth from yourself; and that which you do not have within you will destroy you, if you do not bring it within you.” Do this for one another and so for yourselves, for— as Saint Francis said— it is in the giving that we receive.

“Following her death three years ago, a book of favorite poems was found on the bedside table of Judith’s grandmother, Blanche Doble. Besides sharing a birthday with Judith, this special woman means a great deal to Judith’s family, many of whom are with us today. By way of invitation to Blanche to join in the joy of this day, we would like to share one of those poems; one which is very special to James and Judith.” [or: “By way of invitation to Blanche that she join us in the joy of this day, John and Norah will read Saint Francis’ Simple Prayer from this book.”]

Reading:

[John:] Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace:
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is discord, union;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light!

[Norah:] O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
To be loved, as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born
To eternal life.

“A Simple Prayer” from The Little Flowers of Saint Francis of Assisi

Homily [continued]:

“Fill up and occupy, even challenge your own boundaries, and the boundaries of this relationship that you choose to create anew each day together; fill yourself and this relationship each day to the brim, and discover the grace and mercy of an integrity that has been dared and tested by the courage of your love for one another and the pledge that you have chosen and made to grow together. Commit yourself to the frontiers of life to the hilt, with no gaps and with no reservations, for boundaries will tolerate and shape the radiance of true growth as it is folded and contained within the devoted embrace of love, just as a discipleship will sanction the covenant of your destiny by the commitments that you make in each moment.

“The most significant ways in which James and Judith are different are not those that measure what sets them apart, but instead are ways that acknowledge the existence of a fundamental interdependence and mutuality. Men and women come together in intimate relationship because they require and savor the presence of one another in the mysterious potency of their shared lives. To live in love this way is life’s greatest challenge, for it requires more constant trust, sensitivity, and respect than any other human endeavor.

“There is a traditional passage, whose origin is now unknown, that Judith and James have chosen to read at this time.”

Reading:

[Judith:] “I love you, not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you. I love you, not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are helping me to become. I love you for the part of me that you bring out.”

[James:] “I love you for putting your hand into my heaped-up heart and passing over all the foolish, weak things that you can’t help dimly seeing there; and for drawing out into the light all the beautiful belongings that no one else had looked quite far enough to find.”

[Judith:] “I love you because you are helping to make of the lumber of my life not a tavern but a temple...”

[James:] “...and out of the works of my every day not a reproach but a song...”

Homily [continued]:

“A marriage that lasts grows out of caring for one another, with the desire to understand as completely as possible what the other is thinking and feeling. To know and to be known in this way is the priceless gift that we call love. Since love is not a thing, it is not diminished when it is given. You can offer your love completely, and still retain as much love as that with which you originally began. Rather than saying “love is given to one another,” it would be better to say “love is shared in the giving and in the receiving.” These two people each know this love, and, with God as their witness, ask that they might share this love in one another’s life.”

The Vows:

“James, will you repeat these words after me? ‘I, James... take you, Judith... to be my wife... and in so doing... commit my life to you... encompassing all joys and sorrows... all triumphs and hardships... all experiences and adventures in life... a commitment made in love... kept in faith... lived in hope... and eternally made new.’

“And Judith, will you repeat these words after me? ‘I, Judith... take you, James... to be my husband... and in so doing... commit my life to you... encompassing all joys and sorrows... all triumphs and hardships... all experiences and adventures in life... a commitment made in love... kept in faith... lived in hope... and eternally made new.’”

Ring Exchange:

“Do you have the rings? These rings that you give each other today stand as symbols of the complete yet endless perfection of your relationship. Let wearing them always be a reminder of this.

[To James:] “James, take Judith’s left hand with yours, and place this ring you give her on her hand, but only to the first knuckle: in this way you place your offer of marriage in her hands.

[To Judith:] “And Judith, bring this ring to its rightful place, thus signalling that you accept James’ offer, and marry yourself to him. Now take this ring that you give James and place it on his hand, but again only to the first knuckle: in this way you place your offer of marriage in his hands.

[To James:] “And James, bring this ring to its rightful place, thus signalling that you accept Judith’s offer, and marry yourself to her.”

Pronouncement, Benediction, and Proclamation:

“And so, with the power vested in me, I do witness and affirm your union of love, and pronounce you husband and wife. God bless you both. You may now kiss as husband and wife. Ladies and gentlemen, I now present to you: James T— and Judith W—, husband and wife.”

Recessional:

[James and Judith return up the aisle, followed by Norah and John, and finally the minister.]

John and Christina

[A table is arranged with three candles in their holders and matches, and a bottle of wine with a wineglass and napkin. The mothers of the bride and groom are escorted down the aisle by the best man, David; the minister then enters by a side path, followed by John, accompanied by David, and then by the groomsmen: Shawn, Juan, Tom and Tony. Jacqueline and Teresa then come down the aisle as flower girls, with the bridesmaids: Debbie, Rebecca, Kathleen, and Kristen; then the maid of honor, Maureen, enters, followed by Christina, who is escorted by her fathers. John steps forward to meet them, and escorts Christina to the front. The minister then begins speaking:]

Greeting:

“Christina and John have asked you to be here today, to take part in this wedding, because this is how they want to start their married life together, in the presence of their most special friends and family.”

Invocation:

“Let us pray: Lord, as clearly as we know Your Presence now, we ask that it be known throughout the time shared by these two. Attend them with Your Grace, protect them with your Mighty Power, and guide them with your Love.”

Readings:

“A good relationship has a pattern like a dance, and is built on the same rules. The partners do not need to hold on tightly, because they move confidently in the same pattern, intricate but swift and free, like a country dance of Mozart’s. To touch heavily would be to arrest the pattern and freeze the movement, to check the endlessly changing beauty of its unfolding.

“When you love someone you do not love that person all the time in exactly the same way, from moment to moment; that is an impossibility. And yet this is exactly what most of us demand. We have so little faith in the ebb and flow of life, of love, of relationships. We leap at the flow of the tide and resist in terror its ebb. We are afraid it will never return. We insist on permanence, on duration, on continuity; when the only continuity possible in life, as in love, is in growth, in fluidity-- in freedom, in the sense that the dancers are free, barely touching as they pass, but partners in the same pattern.” [Anne M. Lindbergh]

“I love you, not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you. I love you, not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are helping me to become. I love you for the part of me that you bring out. I love you for putting your hand into my heaped-up heart and passing over all the foolish, weak things that you can’t help dimly seeing there; and for drawing out into the light all the beautiful belongings that no one else had looked quite far enough to find. I love you because you are helping to make of the lumber of my life not a tavern but a temple, and out of the works of my every day not a reproach but a song...”

Homily:

“There is a tradition in which it is sometimes asked that, if there be persons present who know why a wedding such as this should not take place, they should speak now or forever keep their peace. Of course this statement is no longer delivered as an invitation to disrupt the celebration; such opinions will have by now been shared more privately.

Instead this statement, when it is given, is made as an admonition that reminds us of the very real significance of matrimony, and the need for each of us in attendance here today to set aside even the thought of those personal reservations, which might otherwise discourage the commitments being made, that we might join sincerely and wholeheartedly in full support of the decision by these two to wed. Your silence at this time is an eloquent declaration of your assent.

“John, Christina: I will speak to you today of marriage, and of the home; of temper and of humor; of opening yourselves to one another in the constant workings of the heart and mind in a true partnership, and of the reservoir of love that you will build together, to nourish and enjoy in the time that lies ahead.

“Marriage is a special way of being together, of sharing life and love to the breadth and depth your hearts can hold. The home that you are building together for your marriage is a place for that way of being together, a place of commitment, a place of companionship and mutual support. I wish for you such a home of peace.

“Tempered hearts and humorous minds bring pliability and flow to a relationship. Like tempered steel, the tempered heart has been subjected to the extremes of heat and cold at the forge of life, and it is strong, and resilient. The heart that can experience the extremes of anger, fear, and sadness, without becoming overwhelmed, has not lost its temper, and therefore has an emotional integrity in the balance of love and growth.

“The mind that keeps its sense of humor, on the other hand, is one that is not confused by the flowing movement of feelings in all their expression; instead the mind is lubricated by these elixirs of emotion, and is therefore not become dry and humorless. Therefore keep your sense of humor, and your temper, with one another, and exercise them rigorously; for there is a joy in playful teasing, and an art in the scuffle of fair fight.

“A marriage that won’t unmake itself is continually at work upon itself, opening and unfolding as a flower through the ebb and flow of every hour of every season, in its eager willingness to live a life filled by events that will decide its eventual form. Trust and trusting in the process of growth are for this reason fundamental, as is trust in the relationship with one who loves you, with one who is willing and eager to grow in your presence.

“John, Christina: such a person loves you, knowing who you are, beyond any image that you might project. Such a person, in honest and loving respect of you, has no judgments of you, and enjoys being with you, and has chosen you, and stands with you here today. Stand with yourself as well, today, as you stand with one another.

Finally, my wish for you is that this marriage the two of you create today be as a great reservoir, such a reservoir that you would each pour into it the love you have to give, and you would each draw from it the love you need—and may these waters always be as pure as they are today.”

Vows:

“John, please repeat these words after me: ‘Christina, I give to you my love and strength... so that we may grow together... in the happiness and contentment of our love... and I ask you to be my lawful wedded wife... to love, honor and cherish... in sickness and in health... for richer and for poorer... to have and to hold... from this day forth... as long as we both shall live.’

“And Christina, please repeat these words after me: ‘John, in giving you my love... I give my total self... and yet I am not diminished... for I am strengthened by the love I give... and I ask you to be my lawful wedded husband... to love, honor and cherish... in sickness and in health... for richer and for poorer... to have and to hold... from this day forth... as long as we both shall live.’

“And will the members of the families present please stand to give their blessings to Christina and to John in this new relationship? Will you support them with the freedom and love which they need? Will you share your experience and wisdom with them, and seek to learn from them as well? You may say “We will.” And you may be seated, thank you.”

Ring Exchange:

“Do you have the rings? As tokens of the vows you are making to one another today, these rings that you give each other stand as symbols of the complete yet endless perfection of your relationship. Let wearing them always be a reminder of this.

“John, take Christina’s left hand with your own, and place this ring you give to her upon her hand, but only to the first knuckle; in this way you place your offer of marriage in her hands. And Christina, bring this ring to its rightful place upon your hand, thus signalling that you accept John’s offer, and marry yourself to him. Now take this ring that you give to John and place it upon his hand, but again only to the first knuckle; in this way you place your offer of marriage in his hands. And John, bring this ring to its rightful place upon your hand, thus signalling that you accept Christina’s offer, and marry yourself to her.”

Candle Ceremony:

“Will the mothers of the bride and groom please step forward now? [The mothers come forward to light the candles that are held by John and Christina. Jim then excuses them, and resumes:]

“You may be seated, thank you. The ring is an ancient symbol of oneness and wholeness, representing the endless cycling of an eternal continuity. The candleflame symbolizes that portion of the Light of Infinite Spirit that burns within the soul of each one of us. Despite its vulnerable fragility, bending in the transient breezes of this material world, its brightness still stands forward to punctuate the deep blanket of darkness that would otherwise fill and devour the universe.

“In the sharing of this Light with the person that you marry, you are saying, “this that I am is given to you for protection, and for good safekeeping.” And yet, as you share this light, you do not abandon it, nor do you let it go. [Together, John and Christina light the unity candle with their candles, and then place their candles in holders on each side of it.]

“This is the unity between you, and within which you two stand. Always keep the Light of God between you, within you, and surrounding you. Always keep this image of the perfection of Spirit present. And if you should have disagreement, light this candle again, and bring it to you, and let it bring the two of you together again; who you are today will rejoin you then, and awaken you once again to the spiritual promise within each one of you that, together, you will nourish, share, and enjoy.”

Pronouncement, Benediction, and Proclamation:

“And with the power vested in me, I do witness and affirm your union of love, and pronounce you husband and wife. God bless you both. You may now kiss your bride. Ladies and gentlemen, I now present to you: Mr. and Mrs. John and Christina W—!”

[A glass of wine is poured and presented to the couple. They drink a silent toast to one another in ritual communion. They present the empty glass to Jim.]

The Breaking of the Wineglass:

“There are many reasons given for the Jewish tradition of breaking a glass at the close of a wedding ceremony. This ritual dates back to the Talmud, in which it is written: ‘Mar bar Rabina made a wedding feast for his son, at which he observed the rabbis present had become perhaps too exhilarated. So he seized a very expensive goblet and broke it before them, thus making them sober.’

“Rabina’s point was: where there is rejoicing, there should yet be responsibility. I prefer to look upon this ritual as a reminder that there must now be a clean break with the past, that a truly new future together is born upon the shards of what has gone before in each of your individual lives. You are as forever changed by what has happened here today as is this glass.

“It is in this mood that the blessing is given: ‘May you drink always from the full, and crush the empty beneath your feet. In accordance with ancient tradition, we wish that the years of your marriage be not less than the time it would take to fit these fragments together again.’

“Tibetan Buddhism provides a similar teaching in the following anecdote: ‘One day some people came to the master and asked: How can you be happy in a world of such impermanence, where you cannot protect your loved ones from harm, illness and death? —The master held up a glass and said: Someone gave me this glass, and I really like this glass. It holds my water admirably and it glistens in the sunlight. I touch it and it rings! One day the wind may blow it off the shelf, or my elbow may knock it from the table. I know this glass is already broken, so I enjoy it incredibly.’

“I myself, in witness of this ritual, am reminded of William Blakes’ poem:

He who binds to himself a joy
Does the wingèd life destroy;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity’s sun rise.

[The glass is then wrapped in the napkin and placed on the ground at their feet, and John and Christina step on it, crushing it. Then Christina takes her bouquet back from Maureen, and, joining hands, she and John walk

back up the aisle together, followed by Maureen and David, Debbie and Shawn, Rebecca and Juan, Kristen and Tony, Kathleen and Tom, Jacqueline and Teresa, and finally the minister.]

Martin and Bianca

Processional:

[Martin and the minister enter from the side and take their places. “Manha de Carnival” (the theme from the film *Black Orpheus*.) is heard, and Bianca is escorted by her father; Martin meets them and escorts Bianca to stand before the minister.]

Greeting:

“One year ago today, two people— who had long before briefly touched one another’s lives, and then had faded apart for twenty years of time— were by some design brought from the west, from California and Washington, to meet again in Chicago where they had touched before.

“This time, in a short space of days, one year ago today, Bianca and Martin began a love that yet keeps surprising and delighting them both. This day, today, has been set by them for all of us here to recognize and acknowledge their love, their desire to be together, and their desire to cultivate a true partnership of devotion, trust, sharing and understanding.

“Bianca and Martin thank you for coming together today, to take part of their joy as they wed here, amid the rolling hills of California summer. In deciding to marry, they acknowledge the wisdom of Mark Twain, who is said to have said, “Grief can take care of itself, but to get the full value of a joy you must have somebody to divide it with.”

[Musical Interlude]

Readings:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no! it is an ever fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth’s unknown, although his height be taken.
Love’s not Time’s fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle’s compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
 If this be error and upon me proved,
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

[Shakespeare]

Fluorescent interludes
past
passed through me
today.
The way
through years entwined
and apart,
of lives that touched
once
at the start
of our awakening
return
to bring an opening
of hope, of joy
and openness to tears
and thunderstorms.
Delayed lightening
arrives.

[Cahill]

Homily:

“Love is the greatest experience we people may have; it can add a depth of meaning that matches the highest aspirations of our lives. A marriage such as this we celebrate this day; it inaugurates and symbolizes the intimate sharing of two lives in one love. And yet, this sharing must enhance and not diminish the individuality of each partner.

“Sharing love requires great strength. To live in love is life’s greatest challenge, for it requires more constant trust, sensitivity, and respect than any other human endeavor. A marriage that lasts is one that is continually developing and growing in the nourishing, caring, and understanding of each one for the other.

“Deep knowledge of one another is not something achieved in a brief time, and real understanding of one another’s feelings can develop fully only with years of intimacy. This wonderful knowledge grows out of caring for the other with the desire to understand as completely as possible what the other is thinking and feeling. To know and to be known in this way is the priceless gift that we call love.

“To love one another, you must first love yourselves; for you can only give to others what you have first given to yourself, and this is especially true of love. Since love is not a thing, it is not diminished when it is given. You can offer your love completely, and still retain as much love as that with which you originally began. Rather than saying ‘love is given to one another’, it would be better to say ‘love is shared in the giving and in the receiving’. These two people each know this love, and, with God as their witness, ask to share this love in one another’s life.”

Readings:

[Martin:]

I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I
Did, till we loved? were we not weaned till then?
But sucked on country pleasures, childishly?
Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers’ Den?
’Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desired, and got, ’twas but a dream of thee.

Reading:

Life has loveliness to sell,
All beautiful and splendid things,
Blue waves whitened on a cliff,
Soaring fire that sways and sings,
And children's faces looking up,
Holding wonder like a cup.

Life has loveliness to sell,
Music like a curve of gold,
Scent of pine trees in the rain,
Eyes that love you, arms that hold,
And for your spirit's still delight,
Holy thoughts that star the night.

Spend all you have for loveliness,
Buy it and never count the cost;
For one white singing hour of peace
Count many a year of strife well lost,
And for a breath of ecstasy
Give all you have been, or could be.

[Teasdale]

Recessional:

[Martin and Bianca turn and walk back up the aisle arm in arm, followed by the minister. They are followed to the reception area by the guests.]

Richard and Kathleen

Processional:

[A few chairs indicate the place where the wedding will take place. After the guests have gathered, Pablo begins playing incidental classical guitar music as Richard and Jim enter. When Kathleen enters, escorted by her uncle, Fran, Richard meets her, shakes hands with Fran, and escorts her to stand before the minister.]

Greeting:

“Kathleen and Richard have asked you to be here today, to take part in this wedding, because this is how they want to start their married life together, in the presence of their most special friends and family.”

Invocation:

Adorable presence,
Thou who art within and without,
above and below and all around,
Thou who art interpenetrating

every cell of my being,
Thou who art the eye of my eyes,
the ear of my ears,
the heart of my heart,
the mind of my mind,
the breath of my breath,
the life of my life,
the soul of my soul,
Bless us, dear God, to be aware of thy presence
now and here.
May we all be aware of thy presence
in the East and the West, in the North and the South.
May peace and good will abide among individuals,
communities and nations.
This is my earnest prayer.
May peace be unto all!

[Swami Omkar, Prayer for Peace]

Readings:

“Richard and Kathleen have selected these readings, from several different traditions, to be heard this afternoon.”

[Fran:] When the one man loves the one woman and the one woman loves the one man, the very angels leave heaven and come and sit in that house and sing for joy. [Brahma]

[Minister:] There's a bliss beyond all that the minstrel has told,
When two, that are link'd in one heavenly tie,
With heart never changing, and brow never cold,
Love on thro' all ills, and love on till they die.
One hour of a passion so sacred is worth
Whole ages of heartless and wandering bliss;
And oh! if there be an Elysium on earth,
It is this— it is this!

[Thomas Moore]

[Michael:]

A man and a woman sit near each other, and they do not long
at this moment to be older, or younger, nor born
in any other nation, or time, or place.
They are content to be where they are, talking or not talking.
Their breaths together feed someone whom we do not know.
The man sees the way his fingers move;
he sees her hands close around a book she hands to him.
They obey a third body that they share in common.
They have made a promise to love that body.
Age may come, parting may come, death will come.
A man and a woman sit near each other;
as they breathe they feed someone we do not know,
someone we know of, whom we have never seen.

[Robert Bly]

Song:

[Fran and Pablo sing Stevie Wonder's "Ribbon in the Sky" together.]

The Epistle of Saint Paul:

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.

"Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

"Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. [I Corinthians 13]

Song:

[Fran and Pablo sing "How Deep is the Ocean" by Irving Berlin.]

Homily:

"The poem by Robert Bly that was read this afternoon tells of a man and a woman who are near to one another. What is this "nearness" of which he spoke? What can it mean, for one of us to be near another in this way?

"Kahlil Gibran, in speaking of marriage in *The Prophet*, spoke of being near,

...yet not too near together:
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,
And the oak tree and the cypress
grow not in each other's shadow.

This nearness is elsewhere spoken of as a sea in which the tidal currents of many thoughts and feelings flow; if there is to be contact without confusion, if the intimacy that is aroused is not to become engulfing, then free movement must be possible for each of you. Anne Morrow Lindbergh spoke of this nearness as a moving thing, like a country dance of Mozart's. 'To touch heavily' she warns 'would be to arrest the pattern and freeze the movement, to check the endlessly changing beauty of its unfolding...'

"Whether we look out towards the dancing galaxies embedded within the depths of the universe, or into the very heart of atomic structure, we know that everything is made of extremely finite particles that whirl in dizzying patterns about one another, in great realms of what seem to be empty space.

"But what constitutes this space, this realm of nearness, what is this sea in which lovers swim, what is the measure of the music to which those who marry dance? Science has recognized it as the counterplay of two perfectly balanced forces, the forces of attraction and expansion known as gravity and motion. When two people have come into one relationship, these two forces are known as love and growth.

“The two lovers are brought into orbit with one another, and so encircle one another in respectful and caring affection. Their mutual fascination and desire is in fact so strong that, if each of them did not desire to grow as well, they would collide. This other force, this innate desire we have to grow, to move in ever expanding circles, demands autonomy; and were it not for the inspiration that lovers gain from one another, they would therefore grow increasingly apart and become lost in the distance.

“Richard, Kathleen: the differences that lie between you are also a part of your nearness. They will be felt at times with the intensity of emotion that great intimacy can sometimes arouse. They will stretch your love for one another, and your love will therefore grow. Even the tides of trust and well-being will rise and fall in their natural cycle between you, though you may prefer that it be constant and kept to a narrow course, for fear of misunderstandings and confusion. Trust in and enjoy the wholeness of your nearness to one another, in all its phases, and be not troubled by the different qualities that it may take on from day to day, or hour to hour, but take joy in its infinite variation.

“Another poet, William Blake, spoke of the need to enjoy what is in the present moment, rather than require guarantees of permanence, when he wrote:

He who binds to himself a joy
Does the wingèd life destroy;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity’s sunrise.

“True lovers marry not in the attempt to make their love permanent, to shoot it through with some sort of preservative, but rather to vividly acknowledge to one another, before their friends and their families, the eternal nature of their love. Do not bind yourselves to one another, nor ask that the pleasure you know today be bound up in an enduring routine, for such great expectations most assuredly will create great disappointments. Instead, kiss lightly the joy as it flies from one of you to the other, and allow yourselves to be delightfully surprised by one another, and by the depth of life that you two will share, throughout the uneven times that lie ahead.

“The integrity of your nearness is best maintained by attending to the quality of your communication with one another. This communication is not exchanged by words alone but also by your gestures, and beneath your words and gestures by your very attitudes and intentions, for they too will be conveyed, most assuredly. Seek neither to convince nor acquiesce in your relationship, but to partake with great and tender respect and care.

“In his poem Robert Bly speaks of the nearness between a man and a woman, not as a field of energy but as a third embodiment, a separate being that together they have promised to feed and to love, a spiritual quality that is tangible and discernible only to them. It is something we may know of, as Bly says, but we do not take part in it. We invoke this third embodiment today as a guardian angel that will preside over their marriage, and whose angelic presence they will nourish with their love for one another from this very day forward.

“This angelic being, this nearness, this marriage that we see includes the two of you, enfolds you, and nests you. And within it, Richard, Kathleen, you will border one another’s life always and entirely, in mutual content and in ever confirming orbits, as in the two circling parts of the one great Tao. As Lao Tsu said,

Returning is the motion of the Tao.
Yielding is the way of the Tao.
The ten thousand things are born of being.
Being is born of not being.

“Returning is the completion of your journeys in the arms of one another, where all is one. Yielding is the manner in which this nearness, this moving sea, this dance, this angelic being, is acknowledged, and accepted, and af-

firmed by each of you. Yielding is neither compromise nor capitulation; it is recognizing a Presence that neither you, Richard, nor you, Kathleen, may any longer ignore; the Presence you are to one another, and the Presence that is with you, and which is witnessed and celebrated here this day by every one of us. For us it is an honor to be included in this way, and we thank you for allowing us to be here with you.”

Song:

[Don, father of the groom, sings “My Romance”, by Rogers and Hart.]

Vows:

[Richard:] “Kathleen, I promise to love you with my heart and soul. I will respect you and share my life, my passions, and my dreams with you. I will stand by you in all things, your passions, your dreams, with compassion and honesty. I will seek to understand our life together as it unfolds. I give you my faith, in love, in partnership, and in life.”

[Kathleen:] “Richard, I come with a deep love and respect for you. I promise to share my whole self with you, so that our love and trust may always grow... and to embrace the wonder and joy of this sacred journey with you with humor, receptivity, and compassion.”

Ring Exchange

“These rings that you give each other today stand as symbols of the complete yet endless perfection that is possible in your relationship. Let wearing these rings always be a reminder of this. [Richard takes up the ring he is to give Kathleen.]

[To Richard:] “Richard, take Kathleen’s left hand with yours, and place this ring that you give to her upon her hand, but only to the first knuckle: in this way you place your offer of marriage in her hands.

[To Kathleen:] “And Kathleen, bring his ring to its rightful place upon your hand, thus signaling that you accept Richard’s offer, and marry yourself to him. [Then she takes up the ring that she will give to Richard.] Now take this ring that you give to Richard and place it upon his hand, but again only to the first knuckle: in this way you place your offer of marriage in his hands.

[To Richard:] “And Richard, bring her ring to its rightful place upon your hand, thus signaling that you accept Kathleen’s offer, and marry yourself to her.”

Affirmations:

“Richard, with this exchange of vows and rings, do you now take Kathleen to be your wife?” [He says “I do.”]

“And Kathleen, with this exchange of vows and rings, do you now take Richard to be your husband?” [She says “I do.”]

Pronouncement:

“Then, in acknowledgment of your love, and with the authority that is vested in me, I do witness and affirm this union, and pronounce you husband and wife. God bless you both! [To Richard:] You may now kiss your bride. [To Kathleen:] You may now kiss your groom.” [They kiss.]

Benediction:

Look to this day, for it is life-- the very life of life.
In its brief course lie
all the verities and realities of your existence:
the bliss of growth, the glory of action,

the splendor of achievement.
For yesterday is but a dream and tomorrow is only a vision;
but today, well lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness
and every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well, therefore, to this day!
Such is the salutation to the dawn. [Sanskrit Prayer]

Recessional:

[Richard and Kathleen then lead the guests informally toward the tables that have been prepared for their reception.]

Jim and Nedra

Processional:

[The guests follow Jim and the minister to the edge of the sea. As drumming and flute music begins (performed by Ben and Jonathan) Nedra appears at the top of the cliff overlooking the beach, and the guests form a line alongside the path to welcome her as she comes down, preceded by Sarah and Beth, her two flower girls, and escorted by Jim M. The groom steps forward to take her arm, and guides her to where the ceremony will take place, the guests following to form a semicircle about them. The music stops as the wedding begins.]

Greeting:

“We are gathered together here today to participate in the marriage ceremony of Jim and Nedra. They have asked you to be here today, to take part in their wedding, because this is how they want to start their married life together, in the presence of their most special friends and family. Thank you for being here.”

Invocation:

“Our Lord of the Sea, of the Land, and of the Sky: we know that You have always moved forever and relentless within us and among us, with enthusiasm, and with passion; we ask also to know that You will always thus carry us forward in this, Your Way of Life and Path of Love. As clearly as we know Your Presence here today, we ask that it be known throughout the time shared by these two; attend them with Your Grace, protect them with your Mighty Power, and guide them with your Love.”

Reading:

[Nedra:] “A good relationship has a pattern like a dance, and is built on the same rules. The partners do not need to hold on tightly, because they move confidently in the same pattern, intricate but swift and free, like a country dance of Mozart’s. To touch heavily would be to arrest the pattern and freeze the movement, to check the endlessly changing beauty of its unfolding...”

[Jim:] “...When you love someone you do not love that person all the time in exactly the same way, from moment to moment; that is an impossibility. And yet this is exactly what most of us demand. We have so little faith in the ebb and flow of life, of love, of relationships. We leap at the flow of the tide and resist in terror its ebb. We are afraid it will never return. We insist on permanence, on duration, on continuity; when the only continuity possible in life, as in love, is in growth, in fluidity-- in freedom, in the sense that the dancers are free, barely touching as they pass, but partners in the same pattern.” [Anne Morrow Lindbergh]

[Nedra:] "I love you, not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you. I love you, not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are helping me to become. I love you for the part of me that you bring out..."

[Jim:] "...I love you for putting your hand into my heaped-up heart and passing over all the foolish, weak things that you can't help dimly seeing there; and for drawing out into the light all the beautiful belongings that no one else had looked quite far enough to find..."

[Nedra:] "...I love you because you are helping to make of the lumber of my life not a tavern but a temple, and out of the works of my every day not a reproach but a song..." [Unknown]

Music:

["Give Yourself to Love", by Kate Wolf, is sung by Lyndie:]

Kind friends all gathered 'round
There's something I would say
That which brings us together here
Has blessed us all today
Love has made a circle that holds us all inside
Where strangers are as family
And loneliness can't hide

You must give yourself to love
If love is what your after
Open up your heart to the tears and laughter
And give yourself to love
Give yourself to love

Love is born in fire
It's planted like a seed
Love can't give you everything
But it can give you what you need
Love comes when you are ready
Love comes when you're afraid
It will be your greatest teacher
The best friend you have made
You must give yourself to love
If love is what your after
Open up your heart to the tears and laughter
And give yourself to love
Give yourself to love

I've walked these mountains in the rain
I've learned to love the wind
I've been up before the sunrise
Just to watch the day begin
I always knew I'd find you
I never did know how
And like sunshine on a cloudy day
I find you with me now

You must give yourself to love
If love is what your after
Open up your heart to the tears and laughter
And give yourself to love
Give yourself to love

Homily

“Dear friends: it is fitting that we have come here— where the edges of the land and the water meet to be knit together— to recognize and celebrate this marriage of Jim and Nedra today; for it is within the boundaries of high and low tide, in their constant cycling, that we may find a true middle ground. Here, earth is always rhythmically moistened by the waves that play across it; and here the mysteries of the sea may be explored in tidal pools for a while each day; and here the enormity of the depths of their affinity— their trusting vulnerability and their constant presence— are briefly exposed, as the yawning surf once again draws back to throw itself upon the sand.

“Land is distinguished from sea as man is from woman, in a rhythmic pulse that measures out the dance of their relationship— and they distinguish themselves from one another more in a manner of degree than in difference, for the granite of the mountains rise and fall in the same pattern as the breakers of the sea, only in greater amplitude and duration, the one constantly changing— and becoming changed by— the other. Jim, Nedra— may your days together rise and fall in these same cadences, changing each of you in ways that are natural, and may your differences bring you together in celebration of a flowing unity.

“Two powerful forces make up this physical universe in which we live, gathering and holding it together, and awakening it, stirring it into life: gravity— and motion. Just as in the physical universe, two powerful forces are at play within this human condition that make it possible for us to be here: love— and growth. Love, like gravity, is that wonderfully mutual attraction that brings us closer to one another, gathering us into circles of families, friends, communities, and societies.

“The other great force that invigorates the human condition is growth, which— like motion— is an outpouring radiance that flexes the integrity of these circles of love. Growth challenges love in every experience of the human condition— sometimes painfully, sometimes dangerously, but often with an eventual explanation, and always, ultimately, with an enduring personal significance. Jim, Nedra— may each of you, throughout your days together, support the other in loving growth, by means of growing love.

“There is another relationship present here— illustrated by the attendance of these companions, these members of your circle of friends and family that you have invited to be with you today— the relationship of the home to its community. Here too there is a rhythmic dance, a pulse, a tidal ebb and flow, as gifts developed within the home find their way into the world, while society provides a caring human circumstance that will cradle and nourish the family within that home.

“Benjamin Franklin proposed this kind of mutual stewardship, in which the strength and prosperity on the part of each of us is seen as a community resource, to be invested upon the collective level, where it may build a positive society that provides motivation and opportunity for developing in each of one us self-improvement, self-reliance, and ultimately that sort of self-esteem that is necessary for a true intimacy, rather than an enmeshed and enabling co-dependency.

“Jim, Nedra— may you enjoy a love together that makes each of you a better person, by giving you a joy and zest for living, and providing energy to meet the many challenges of life. May your home be not merely a place of stone and wood, but a place of sanity, serenity and security. May your home be filled with love and peace, and filled with kindness, warmth, caring and laughter. May your home encompass simplicity, beauty, silence and color, in harmony with the rhythms of life. May your home find its place in your community, and may your com-

munity find its place in your home. And finally, when you have come to the next great threshold of this life that you will have shared from this day forward, may you be able to say to one another: “because you have loved me, my life has been enriched and made complete.”

Acknowledgment:

“Who is it that has brought this woman to this ceremony? [Jim signals his presence from the gathering.] We are grateful for all of you that have made this day possible, not just in being here, but in bringing this day— and these two people— with you.”

Ring Exchange:

“The ring is an ancient symbol of oneness and wholeness, representing the endless cycling of an eternal continuity.” [The rings are then exchanged in silence as ceremonial tokens of the bond that is being established between husband and wife.]

Personal Commitments:

[Jim speaks to Nedra:] “Nedra, grow old with me; there is still more magic to be created. No matter how the waves move, we will see it through. Trust me: I share my heart with you and give you my word to love you incredibly, to honor the beautiful soul you are, to be honest and faithful, and to support your spiritual growth. I promise to have loving words and thoughts for you every day, and to be your true and lasting lover and best friend. We have no ordinary love.” [Nedra’s words to Jim are not recorded.]

Water Ritual:

[Nedra goes to the water’s edge with the flower girls, Sarah and Beth, to bring two glasses of water back to Jim.] “This water reminds us that relationships are very much like the ocean. No matter how the waves may appear on the surface, whether they be choppy or calm, we can seek the quiet and stillness of the deeper currents beneath it all.” [They pour the two glasses of water into one bottle.]

Vows:

“Jim, Nedra— in speaking the vows that you have prepared for one another, please remember this: love is not an object, and is therefor not diminished when it is given. As you can offer your love fully, you will retain as much love as that with which you originally began.”

[Jim:] “Nedra, for your caring sensitivity, your trustworthiness and integrity, and for achieving such high aspirations, I give to you my love, my respect, my acceptance, and my sensitivity from this very day forward.”

[Nedra:] “Jim, for your sensitivity and your strength, for your great optimism, and because you have accepted me as myself, I give to you my love, my caring, my tenderness, my strength and support, from this very day forward.”

[They speak in unison:] “We hereby commit ourselves to sharing our lives and love with one another. Let us venture forth into the sunshine and the rainstorms, the lightning and the rainbows, with kindness, commitment, compassion, and a sense of humor.”

[They then speak antiphonal, in turns, first Nedra, then Jim:] “As my best friend and lover... (As my best friend and lover...) I will walk with you throughout time... (I will walk with you throughout time...) because love goes beyond time ... (because love goes beyond time ...). In this way I honor you... (in this way I honor you...) as my soul’s heart (as my soul’s heart).”

[The minister addresses the gathering:] “And will you, family and friends of Nedra and Jim, support them with the freedom and love that they desire? Will you share your experience and wisdom with them, and seek to learn from them as well? You may say ‘we will’.”

The Breaking of the Glass:

[Handing an empty glass to Jim, the minister says:] “One day some people came to the master and asked...”

[Jim:] “How can you be happy in a world of such impermanence, where you cannot protect your loved ones from harm, illness and death?”

[Handing an empty glass to Nedra, the minister says:] “The master held up a glass and said...”

[Nedra:] “Someone gave me this glass, and I really like this glass. It holds my water admirably and it glistens in the sunlight. I touch it and it rings! One day the wind may blow it off the shelf, or my elbow may knock it from the table. I know this glass is already broken, so I enjoy it incredibly.” [The glasses are placed in a bag and broken under their feet to the shouts of “Mazel tov!”]

Pronouncement:

“With the power vested in me, I do witness and affirm your union of love, and pronounce you husband and wife.”

[Jim kisses Nedra.]

Benediction:

“May the Source of all life sustain your life together, and fill it with many blessings. May It’s radiance be a continuing presence in your life, to touch it with grace and beauty. And may your life be a long one together, filled with health, happiness, love, and peace. Peace in your home, and peace in your hearts.”

Recessional:

[The drumming and flute music resumes as the guests follow Jim and Nedra back up the trail from the beach.]

Norman and Julie

Processional:

[A table is arranged beneath an archway, and upon it there are a goblet of wine and a wineglass to be broken in its napkin. After the guests are seated, the following people are escorted to their seats: thee grandmothers of the groom, the grandmother of the bride, the mother of the bride, and the mother of the groom. Then the rabbi and the minister enter from the side as officiants, followed by the groomsmen, including Mike as the best man, and then Norman. Mike returns to escort Debbie to the front; and as she sings “You Light Up My Life”, Joel comes down the aisle as the ringbearer, followed by Jenni as the bridesmaid, Robin as the Maid of Honor, and finally Julie, on the arm of her grandfather, Ted.]

Greeting:

“We are gathered here today to witness the joining in marriage of Norman G— T— and Julie D— T—. During this celebration we will be drawing from the Jewish and Christian heritage alike, in recognition of the two traditions that have come together today to establish an entirely new way, an entirely new home, for these two people, together.”

Invocation:

[The rabbi invokes God’s Presence in Hebrew, and then in English.]

Reading:

“This reading is from the Book of Ruth, chapter one, verses sixteen and seventeen:

And Ruth said,
Entreat me not to leave thee,
or to return from following after thee:
for whither thou goest, I will go;
and where thou lodgest, I will lodge.
Thy people shall be my people,
and thy God my God;
where thou diest, will I die,
and there will I be buried.

The Lord do so to me, and more also,
if aught but death part thee and me.

The Seven Blessings:

“According to the Jewish tradition, we will now hear the Seven Blessings, read in Hebrew by Sheldon T—, father of the groom, and in English by Chris C—, mother of the bride. These Seven Blessings remind us of the Seven Days of Creation at the beginning of time, when life was whole; and they look forward to that time when it will be whole again, in such complete joy as we have here, today.”

1. We acknowledge the Unity of All,
grateful as we are for the fruit of the vine,
both symbol and instrument of our rejoicing.
2. We acknowledge the Unity of All,
knowing that each separate moment
and every distinct object
indicates and shares in this oneness.
3. We acknowledge the Unity of All,
recognizing and appreciating
the blessing of being human.
4. We acknowledge the Unity of All,
realizing the special gift of awareness
that lets us know this unity,
and the wonder we experience as
a man and a woman are joined together today
to live as one.
5. May rejoicing resound throughout the world
as the homeless are given homes,
as persecution and oppression cease,
and as all people learn to live in peace with each other
and in harmony with their environment.
6. From the source of all energy
we call forth an abundance of love
to envelop this couple.

May they be for each other lovers and friends,
and may their love have that same innocence,
purity, and sense of discovery
that the First Couple had known in Eden.

7. We acknowledge the Unity of All,
and we celebrate today with joy and gladness,
bridegroom and bride in pleasure and delight,
love and harmony, peace and companionship.
May we all witness that day
when these sounds of happiness,
the voices of lovers in feasting and in singing,
can be heard in Jerusalem and throughout the world.
Praised is love; blessed be this marriage.
May the bride and bridegroom rejoice together.

[Julie and Norman drink from the goblet.]

Homily:

“Norman, Julie: I want you to know marriage in the way that I know it, in the way it has inspired my own life, and made it wonderful. Marriage is a commitment made to one another, yes, but more than that: it is a commitment that each of you make to yourselves. For this reason, make every promise that you make to one another doubly strong, by making it a promise to yourself as well. And remember that, as each gift that you give one another is fully shared in the giving, so any trouble that you may cause one another will surely bring pain to yourself as well. Do good deeds, speak kind words, and hold loving thoughts for one another, for every forgiveness that you extend will forgive yourself as well, and every moment of your gratitude will fill this time that you two share with loving peace and contentment.”

The Ketuba:

“In repeating these words after me, you make the following promises to one another. Norman: ‘Julie, as your husband... I promise to love and respect you... to be patient with you... to be supportive... and to be honest and open... and with this promise... I accept you as my wife.’ And Julie: ‘Norman, as your wife... I promise to be honest... thoughtful and faithful;... and with this promise... I accept you as my husband.’”

The Vows:

“According to the Christian tradition, we will now have a recitation of the wedding vows. Norman, do you take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold, in sickness and in health, for richer and for poorer, forsaking all others and cleaving unto her, ‘til death do you part? [Norman responds, ‘I do.’] And Julie, do you take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband, to have and to hold, in sickness and in health, for richer and for poorer, forsaking all others and cleaving unto him, ‘til death do you part? [Julie responds, ‘I do.’]”

Ring Exchange:

“May we have the rings? [Norman takes his ring for Julie from Joel, and, holding Julie’s left hand with his own left hand, he repeats after the minister:] “With this ring I thee wed... in keeping with the heritage... of Moses and Israel. [Norman then places his ring on her finger, thereby offering himself to her; Julie adjusts the ring so that it fits comfortably in its rightful place on her hand, thereby accepting his offer. She then takes her ring for Norman from Joel, and, holding Norman’s left hand with her own left hand, she repeats after Jim:]

“This ring that I give to you... is a symbol of the togetherness... and love that we both share.” [Julie then places her ring on Norman’s finger, thereby offering herself to him; he then adjusts the ring so that it fits comfortably in its rightful place on his hand, thereby accepting her offer.]

The Pronouncement:

“With the authority vested in me, I now pronounce you husband and wife.”

Benediction:

[Rabbi Weiss enfolds Norman and Julie within his prayer shawl and explains the traditions of the breaking of the wineglass and the tallit. He then recites a benediction in Hebrew and in English, the glass is broken, and the couple exchange the matrimonial kiss.]

Recessional:

[Norman and Julie are quickly escorted by Robin and Ira down the aisle to a quiet, secluded place for a few minutes while their reception is prepared for them. Upon their return, the minister says:] Ladies and gentlemen, I now take great pleasure in introducing to you: Mr. and Mrs. Norman and Julie T—.

Robert and Rachael

Processional:

[After the guests are seated, Pachelbel’s “Canon in D” is heard as Robert comes from the house and around the right of the pond towards the gazebo, accompanied by Darrel as best man and the minister. Rebecca, sister of the bride and her maid of honor, is then escorted down the grassy slope and around the left of the pond towards the gazebo by Jeff, who then takes his seat. Then everyone stands as Rachael is escorted down the grassy slope around the left of the pond towards the gazebo by her father, Juan; Robert meets them and, shaking hands with Juan, he escorts Rachael to stand before Jim while Juan takes his seat with the immediate family.]

Greeting:

“Robert and Rachael have asked you to be here with them today, and to take part in this wedding, because this is how they want to start their married life together— in the presence of their most special friends and family. So, in honor of our very human desire, ability, and need to love, let us now recognize and celebrate their marriage.”

Invocation:

“Our God of Spirit in Nature: just now we ask for the healing that— in love— makes whole the family. We ask that we might find as well the wisdom to move with this love, according to our faith in You, even as our trust in the path that we have chosen might at times be shaken. Standing here, within this garden, upon this hillside, above this city, we number ourselves among your tall trees; with them our roots plough deeply into Mother Earth, and our branches comb out Father Sky. We know that You have always moved, forever and relentless, within us and among us, with enthusiasm and with passion; we ask to know as well that You will always thus carry us forward in this, Your Way of Life and Path of Love.”

Music:

“Love can Build a Bridge”, written by Winona and Naomi Judd and sung by Rebecca and Jeff.

Reading:

“A reading has been prepared for this moment by Rob’s mother, Katy.” [Kathleen reads her contribution.]

Homily:

“Rachael, Robert— in this mortal world that we share, where things are best considered eternal rather than preserved, we celebrate the healing nature of relationships such as yours, which never end once they are begun though they do change in appearance as people grow. We celebrate these relationships in joyous ceremonies such as this wedding today, to indicate our acknowledgment and affirmation of a love such as yours, a love that continually holds us close to one another— even as we each may grow, spreading our lives outward into the world.

“Marriage touches into a place where the quantity of time can neither measure nor contain the quality of the relationship that abides between man and woman, between husband and wife. And yet something, still unmeasurable, does take place over a certain measurable period of time, a sort of alchemical unfolding of the relationship between two people such as you into some one thing that is wholly new, and wholly wonderful.

“In the making of fine wines, the term ‘marriage’ refers specifically to the blending over gradual time of the qualities of each variety of fruit brought in from the field, until what had been the various immature and contrasting properties of each contribution become constituent to one rich deep complexity. A wedding may take place on one particular day, as does the harvest and the crush, but the marriage will continue to take place over a greater period of time, in which the qualities of each will mature in the presence of the other. Rachael, Robert— it may not have been apparent when first you met, but in the routine and occasional glance or gesture of affection for your beloved, in time you may begin to recognize and welcome a certain resonance within yourself, an echo of the other deep within you, and know that here, within yourself, you have become finally and fully married.

“Rachael, Robert— may the home that you build together find its place in your community, and may your community find its place within your home. May each of you find the commitment and consummation of marriage within yourselves, in order that it become complete between the two of you. And may the two of you, throughout your days together, support one another in loving growth, through growing love.”

Vows:

“Robert, will you repeat these words after me? ‘I, Robert, take you, Rachael ... to be my wife... and in so doing... I commit my life to you... encompassing all joys and sorrows... all triumphs and hardships... all experiences in life... This commitment that I give to you... is made in love... kept in faith... lived in hope... and eternally made new.’

“And Rachael, will you repeat these words after me? ‘I, Rachael, take you, Robert... to be my husband... and in so doing... I commit my life to you... encompassing all joys and sorrows... all triumphs and hardships... all experiences in life... This commitment that I give to you... is made in love... kept in faith... lived in hope... and eternally made new.’”

Ring Exchange:

“These rings that you give one another stand as symbols of the complete yet endless perfection of your relationship. Let wearing them always be a reminder of this.” [The rings are then exchanged as ceremonial tokens of the bond being established between husband and wife: Robert takes his ring from Darrel and places it on Rachael’s hand, then Rachael takes her ring from Rebecca and places it on Robert’s hand.]

The Pronouncement, Benediction, and Proclamation:

“And now, in acknowledgment and affirmation of your union in love, and with the authority vested in me, I pronounce you husband and wife. God bless you both! [To Robert:] You may now kiss your bride.” [They kiss.] Ladies and gentlemen, I now take great pleasure in introducing to you: Mr. and Mrs. Robert and Rachael F—.”

My heart races thinking of you
us together passion always new

To hold you in my arms all night
creates in me a wondrous delight

I often ponder of how together we'll grow
for me there's no other... this I know

You I have waited a whole lifetime for
happiness for us is what life has in store

I with you, and you with me
never could I want any more.

I love you Kelli
The only thing that will ever change
is that my love for you will grow stronger, if that is possible
Through good times and bad times, I will always be with you.

[Kelli:]

Now that we're together, I have more to share
A treasure that can't be measured
more love than I can imagine your sensitivity can't be fathomed
your care and concern are clear by admitting when you are wrong
I feel so happy when you shed a tear and share your feelings
it makes us strong
because when we have problems I'll be there to solve them
problems are only challenges to make us better
but most of all, being with you is so much fun
I want to be your partner in life
your best friend and one you can confide
to be the best I can be
to share, to care, in times of need
I say this from the bottom of my heart
the one that makes your dreams come true
in love with you.

[Kyle :] "In joy and in sorrow, I will always be with you. As I promised myself to you lifetimes ago, I do now. As my best friend, I will walk with you throughout time, because love goes beyond time. In this way I honor you as my soul's heart."

[Kelli:] "I promise with all my heart to be honest and faithful, to respect and honor your individuality, and to support your personal growth; to share with you my life, my joys, my sorrows; to love you, and to be your true and lasting friend."

Ring Exchange:

"Do you have the rings? These rings that you give to one another today stand as symbols of the complete yet endless perfection of your relationship. Let wearing them always be a reminder of this.

“Kyle, take Kelli’s left hand with your own, and place this ring that you give to her upon her hand, but only to the first knuckle: in this way you will place your offer of marriage in her hands. And Kelli, bring this ring to its rightful place upon your hand, thus signalling that you accept his offer, and marry yourself to Kyle.

“Now Kelli, take Kyle’s left hand with your own, and place this ring that you give to him upon his hand, but again only to the first knuckle: in this way you will place your offer of marriage in his hands. And Kyle, bring this ring to its rightful place upon your hand, thus signalling that you accept her offer, and marry yourself to Kelli.”

Vows:

“Will you, Kyle, take Kelli to be your wife, and promise these things to her: to be honest with her and faithful, to respect, trust, help and care for her, to share your entire life with her, to forgive her as we have been forgiven, and to try with her to better understand yourselves, the world, and God, through the best and the worst of that which is to come, as long as you both shall live?” [Kyle says “I will.”]

“And will you, Kelli, take Kyle to be your husband, and promise these things to him: to be honest with him and faithful, to respect, trust, help and care for him, to share your entire life with him, to forgive him as we have been forgiven, and to try with him to better understand yourselves, the world, and God, through the best and the worst of that which is to come, as long as you both shall live?” [Kelli says “I will.”]

Pronouncement and Benediction:

“And so, with the power and authority vested in me, I do witness and affirm your union of love, and pronounce you husband and wife. God bless you both. You may now kiss your bride.”

Recessional:

[Kelli leaves with Kyle, and Melody with Scotty, followed by the minister and the guests.]

Matt and Sher

Processional:

[This wedding took place on board a sloop, at anchor, with a rabbi and a minister officiating; the guests stood aboard a nearby, larger yacht, within hailing distance.]

Greeting:

[Minister:] “Matt and Sher have asked you to be here today to take part in this wedding, because this is how they want to start their married life together, in the presence of their friends and family, on board and underway.”

Invocation

[Minister:] “God, as clearly as we know Your Presence now, we ask that it be known throughout the time shared by these two. Attend them with Your Grace, protect them with your Mighty Power, guide them with your Love, and cleanse them regularly with Your Forgiveness.”

Reading:

Look to this day, for it is life-- the very life of life.
In its brief course lie

all the verities and realities of your existence:
the bliss of growth, the glory of action,
the splendor of achievement.
For yesterday is but a dream and tomorrow is only a vision;
but today, well lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness
and every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well, therefore, to this day!
Such is the salutation to the dawn. [Sanskrit prayer]

Consecration of the Marital Baseball:

[Minister:] “Matt and Sher have asked that this ball be autographed by everyone present, in consecration of this Opening Day of their Season...” [The baseball is handed around for each guest to sign.]

Readings:

Let there be spaces in your togetherness,
And let the winds of the heavens
 dance between you.
Love one another, but make not a bond of love:
Let it rather be a moving sea
 between the shores of your souls.
Fill each other’s cup but drink not from one cup.
Give one another of your bread
 but eat not from the same loaf.
Sing and dance together and be joyous,
 but let each one of you be alone,
Even as the strings of a lute are alone
 though they quiver with the same music.
Give your hearts, but not into each other’s keeping.
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.
And stand together yet not too near together:
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,
And the oak tree and the cypress
 grow not in each other’s shadow.

—Kahlil Gibran

[Rabbi:] “I would like at this time to speak of some of the things which many of us wish for you: first, we wish for you a love that makes both of you better people by giving you a joy and zest for living, providing energy to meet the many challenges of life. We wish for you a home; not merely a place of stone and wood, but a place of sanity, serenity and security. May it serve as a sanctuary in which the values you hold most deeply are strengthened to fortify you as you move in the world at large. We wish for you a home of love and peace, filled with kindness, warmth, caring and laughter. A home that encompasses simplicity, beauty, silence and color, in harmony with the rhythms of life. We hope that you will stand by your children when they need you, and then stand aside when it is time. Finally, we wish that you will be able to say to each other: ‘because you have loved me, my life has been enriched.’”

Vows:

[Sher:] “In making these vows to you, Matt, as my husband, I am also asking you to be witness to these vows I make to myself: to you I promise to be with you as your friend; to myself I promise to work my program, and keep working on my stuff.”

[Matt:] “In making these vows to you, Sher, as my wife, I ask you to be witness to these vows I make to myself: to you I promise to try to be as gentle as I can with you, to be dependable, and to be a companion through the mystery of our relationship; to myself I promise to take good care of myself, so I can also take good care of this relationship, and to commit to seeing this through.”

Ring Exchange:

[This is done in silence. Matt takes Sher’s left hand in his own left hand, and places his ring on her finger, thereby offering himself to her; she then adjusts the ring so that it fits comfortably in its rightful place on her hand, thereby accepting his offer of marriage. She then takes Matt’s left hand in her own left hand, and places her ring on his finger, thereby offering herself to him; he then adjusts the ring so that it fits comfortably in its rightful place on his hand, thereby accepting her offer of marriage.]

The Breaking of the Glass:

[Rabbi:] “One day some people came to the master and asked...”

[Matt:] “How can you be happy in a world of such impermanence, where you cannot protect your loved ones from harm, illness and death?”

[Rabbi:] “The master held up a glass and said...”

[Sher:] “Someone gave me this glass, and I really like this glass. It holds my water admirably and it glistens in the sunlight. I touch it and it rings! One day the wind may blow it off the shelf, or my elbow may knock it from the table. I know this glass is already broken, so I enjoy it incredibly.” [The glass is placed in its bag and broken under their feet.]

Pronouncement:

[Minister:] “With the power vested in me, I do witness and affirm your union of love, and pronounce you husband and wife.”

Blessing:

[Antiphonal: the rabbi, in Hebrew, followed by the minister, in English:]

May the Source of all life sustain your life together, and fill it with many blessings.
May It’s radiance be a continuing presence in your life, to touch it with grace and beauty.
And may your life be a long one together, filled with health, happiness, love, and peace.
Peace in your home, and peace in your hearts.

Stuart and Toni

Processional:

[When Toni is ready, the music begins: “Chapel of Love”; Stuart stands at the alter with his brother Steve, as Best Man, and the minister. When “Twelfth of Never” begins playing, Cathy as the Maid of Honor approaches, followed by Toni on the arm of her brother, David.]

Greeting:

“In honor of our very human desire, ability, and need to love, let us now recognize and celebrate the marriage of Toni and Stuart.”

Invocation:

“Lord, just now we ask for the healing that— in love— makes whole the family. We ask that we might find as well the wisdom to move with this love, according to our faith in You, even as our trust in the path that we have chosen might be shaken. We ask also to invoke the spirit of Jimmy at the start of Stuart and Toni’s wedding, for it was in his passing that these two were reunited. May this marriage be blessed by the memory of the freedom of his youth, his beautiful warm smile, and his patience, his innocence and good nature, and his dedication to his family and belief in everlasting love. Although he cannot be here in person, Jimmy will live on forever in the hearts of Stuart and Toni.

“Because no love can ever take the place of any other that has gone before it, but can only enrich it, and thereby enlarge our capacity for love (the heart grown thereby greater), we ask that we may know Lord that You are forever and everywhere with those we love who are no longer among us— especially Jimmy— just as You are here with us today. Finally, we ask that You be with Toni and Stuart, in this way, always.”

Contributions:

“Members of the family have asked to say a few words at this time...”

Homily:

“In this mortal world, where things are eternal rather than preserved, we celebrate the healing nature of relationships, which never end once they are begun, though they will change in appearance as people grow. We celebrate these relationships in ceremonies such as this today, to indicate our acknowledgement and affirmation of the love that eternally holds us all to one another, even as we each may grow. Marriage touches into a place where the quantity of time can neither measure nor contain the quality of the relationship.

“And yet something still unmeasurable does take place over a certain period of time, a sort of alchemical maturation of the relationship of two people into some one thing that is wholly new, and wholly wonderful. In the making of fine wines, the term “marriage” refers specifically to the blending over gradual time of the qualities of each variety brought in from the field, until what had been the various immature and contrasting properties of each contribution become constituent to one rich deep complexity.

“A wedding may take place on one particular day, as does the harvest and the crush, but the marriage will continue to take place over a greater period of time, in which the qualities of each will mature in the presence of the other. It may not have been apparent when first you met, but in the routine and occasional glance or gesture of affection for your beloved, in time, you may begin to recognize a certain resonance within yourself, an echo of the other deep within you, and know that here within yourself you have become finally and fully married.

“An outer marriage between two people that does not house this personal commitment to oneself is empty; and such an inner marriage, if it does not take place within a companionship of commitment, will have no home within the community, and will go unrecognized by one another to cause unfortunate misunderstandings, and thus, unrealized, must drift in some distracted dissatisfaction. The commitment and consummation of marriage then is one thoroughly within each one of you, in order that it be complete between the two of you. Stuart, Toni— may each of you, throughout your days together, support the other in loving growth, through growing love.”

The Vows:

[Stuart reads to Toni:] “Toni, I take you to me and give myself to you, forever. I will love you and cherish you. I will listen to you and respect you. I will honor you with all my heart and soul. I will care for you, and encourage you, and your growth will be my growth. I will stay with you in bad times and in good. I am nourished to my roots by your steadfast love.”

[Toni reads to Stuart:] “I, Toni, offer to you, Stuart, my loving heart in marriage. As the sun rises each day, let it bring with it a new beginning. As the trees are firmly planted and represent growth, may our love continue to grow. As the birds are free, may our marriage be blessed with the freedom to be ourselves. As the moon rises at the end of each day, may we share with one another our daily accomplishments, as well as our failures. May we always respect what we have found in each other to be unique. May we enjoy growing old together. May we always be best friends. I love you, Stuart.”

Ring Exchange:

[This is done in silence. Stuart takes his ring for Toni from Steve, takes Toni’s left hand in his own left hand, and places his ring on her finger, thereby offering himself to her; she then adjusts the ring so that it fits comfortably in its rightful place on her hand, thereby accepting his offer. She then takes her ring for Stuart from Cathy, takes Stuart’s left hand in her own left hand, and places her ring on his finger, thereby offering herself to him; he then adjusts the ring so that it fits comfortably in its rightful place on his hand, thereby accepting her offer.]

Pronouncement and Benediction:

“With the authority vested in me, I now pronounce you husband and wife. God bless you both— you may kiss the bride.”

Matthew and Judith

“Dear friend, we are sea & land— it is not our purpose to become each other, it is to recognize each other— to learn to see the other and honor one for what one is— each the other’s opposite and complement.” [Hermann Hesse]

Processional:

[After the guests are seated, George Winston’s “Variations on the Kanon by Johann Pachelbel” is heard as Matthew enters, accompanied by John, as best man, and the minister. Rachael, the flower girl, enters with MJ, the ring bearer; then Jennifer, the maid of honor, enters; then everyone stands as Judith is escorted to Matthew by her father, Martin; Matthew meets them and, shaking hands with Martin, he escorts Judith to stand before the minister.]

Greeting:

“Judi and Matt have asked you to be here today, to take part in this wedding, because this is how they want to start their married life together, in the presence of their most special friends and family.”

Invocation:

“Let us pray: Lord, as clearly as we know Your Presence now, we ask that it be known throughout the time shared by these two, from this day forward, and wherever it is that they go together. Attend them with Your Grace, protect them with your Mighty Power, and guide them with Your Love.”

Readings:

“It does not matter whether I am a human being or a Being of Light— if I do not have love, I am simply an empty instrument. Though I might have the gift of insight, and understand all the mysteries and knowledges, and though I might have enough faith to move entire mountains, still— if I do not have love, I have nothing. And

though I might give away everything that I own, and have this body that I am burned to ash after I have died, still— if I do not have love, these grand gestures of a modest humility give me nothing.

“Love is patient and kind, and never envious. Love is neither pretentious nor full of itself, but rather discreet, looking for inspiration rather than approval. Love is not easily saddened, or frightened, or angered, and does not think in terms of what is right and wrong, but rather in terms of what is real and true. Love recognizes all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and allows all things. Love never fails, while opinions will always fail; for knowledge is only temporary, and words are always inadequate, as long as we can only see and speak about our little part of the entirety. When we have finally learned about the complete and perfect totality that embraces everything everywhere, then we will have come finally to know how little it is we had ever known.

“When I was a child I thought as a child, and I spoke as a child; but when I became grown, I put my childishness away. Now we see through a glass, darkly; later we will see things face to face. Now we know only a part, but later we will know it all, including ourselves; and then, finally, we will no longer be a mystery to ourselves. But for now, these are things we have: faith, hope, and love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

[Adapted from First Corinthians 13]

Homily:

“I will speak to you today of marriage, and of the home; of temper and of humor; of opening yourselves to one another in the constant workings of the heart and mind in a true partnership, and of the reservoir of love that you will build together, to nourish and enjoy in the time that lies ahead.

“Marriage is a special way of being together, of sharing life and love to the breadth and depth your hearts can hold. The home that you are building together for your marriage is a place for that way of being together, a place of commitment, a place of companionship and mutual support. I wish for you such a home of peace.

“Tempered hearts and humorous minds bring pliability and flow to a relationship. Like tempered steel, the tempered heart has been subjected to the extremes of heat and cold at the forge of life, and it is strong, and resilient. The heart that can experience the extremes of anger, fear, and sadness, without becoming overwhelmed, has not lost its temper, and therefore has an emotional integrity in the balance of love and growth.

“The mind that keeps its sense of humor, on the other hand, is one that is not confused by the flowing movement of feelings in all their expression; instead the mind is lubricated by these elixirs of emotion, and is therefore not become dry and humorless. Therefore keep your sense of humor, and your temper, with one another, and exercise them rigorously; for there is a joy in playful teasing, and an art in the scuffle of fair fight.

“A marriage that won’t unmake itself is continually at work upon itself, opening and unfolding as a flower through the ebb and flow of every hour of every season, in its eager willingness to live a life filled by events that will decide its eventual form. Trust and trusting in the process of growth are for this reason fundamental, as is trust in the relationship with one who loves you, with one who is willing and eager to grow in your presence.

“Matt, Judi: such a person loves you, knowing who you are, beyond any image that you might project. Such a person, in honest and loving respect of you, has no judgments of you, and enjoys being with you, and has chosen you, and stands with you here today. Stand with yourself as well, today, as you stand with one another.

“Finally, my wish for you is that this marriage the two of you create today be as a great reservoir, such a reservoir that you would each pour into it the love you have to give, and you may each draw from it the love you need— and may these waters always be as pure as they are today.”

Readings:

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints, —I love thee with the breath,
smiles, tears of all my life! —and if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

“I shall pursue you, and I shall go with you then into the wilderness and there I shall comfort you. There I shall restore you, and together we will move through the Valley of Shadows to the Gateway of Hope. And you will sing once again as you sang in your youth, when you first came up out of the darkness of your innocence. On the day that we know we are married we will make a covenant with the wild beasts of the field, with the birds of the air, and the things that creep upon the ground; and bow and sword and weapon of war shall be broken and swept off the earth, so that all of life may bed down together without fear. I commit myself to you forever, and pledge myself to you because it is right for me to do so, with unfailing devotion and loving kindness; and— with God's Mercy—to have, and to hold.” [Hosea 2:14-15; 18-19]

Vows:

“Matt, will you please repeat these words after me: ‘I, Matthew, take you, Judith... to be my lawful wedded wife... to love, honor and cherish... in sickness and in health... for richer and for poorer... to have and to hold... from this day forward... and this commitment that I give to you... is made in love... kept in faith... lived in hope... and eternally made new.’

“Judi, will you please repeat these words after me: ‘I, Judith, take you, Matthew... to be my lawful wedded husband... to love, honor and cherish... in sickness and in health... for richer and for poorer... to have and to hold... from this day forward... and this commitment that I give to you... is made in love... kept in faith... lived in hope... and eternally made new.’

[Addressing the parents of the bride and groom:] “Mrs. P—, Mr. and Mrs. J—, will you give your blessings to Matt and Judi in their marriage? Will you support them with the freedom and love which they need? Will you share your experience and wisdom with them, and seek to learn from them as well?” [They say “we will.”]

Ring Exchange:

“Do you have the rings? —These rings that you give each other today stand as ancient symbols, blessed and simple, symbols of the complete yet endless perfection of your relationship, forever and everywhere. The ring is round like the sun, round like the eye, and round like arms that embrace. These circles each describe the love that is given and that comes back around to be received again and again. Therefore, let wearing your rings always be a reminder that your love must, like the sun, illuminate; like the eye, see clearly; and like arms that embrace, be a grace upon this world. [Judi removes her engagement ring and hands it to Jennifer, while Matt takes up the ring he is to give Judi.]

Proclamation:

“Ladies and gentlemen, I now take great pleasure in introducing to you: Mr. Matthew P— and Mrs. Judith J-P—. [The bride had chosen to hyphenate her name with the groom’s, rather than simply take his name; this proclamation was intended to clarify her decision, and to make it known.]

Recessional:

[As the music of George Winston is heard the canopy is retired, and Judith and Matthew return up the aisle followed by the other members of the wedding party.]

Nicholas and Anne Marie

Processional:

[The minister, Danny and Nick take their places at the alter. Ellen enters and walks down the aisle; she is met halfway by Danny, who escorts her the rest of the way. Anne Marie then enters and comes halfway down the aisle, where she is met by Nick, who escorts her to the alter.]

Greeting:

“Anne Marie and Nick have asked you to be here with them today, to take part in this wedding, because this is how they want to start their married life together— in the presence of those people who are most special to them.”

Invocation:

“Lord, as clearly as we know Your Presence now, we ask that it be known throughout the time shared by these two, from this day forward. Attend them with Your Grace, protect them with your Mighty Power, and guide them with your Love.”

Homily:

“Nick, Anne Marie: as you will learn together after this day, marriage is a very privileged and special way of being together, of sharing life and love to the breadth and depth that your hearts can hold. When you marry you are committing your lives to one another; do this with wisdom, and do this with love. Speak kind words to one another every day, and nurture each other’s spirit, so that you may grow— together.

“In standing with you now, here at the start of your marriage, my heart is filled with these wishes for you: I wish for you two the kind of love that gives a zest for life, and provides the joyful energy to meet the many challenges and opportunities that await you. I wish for you a home; not merely a building or a residence, but a place of sanity, serenity and security— may it serve as a sanctuary in which the values you hold most deeply are strengthened to fortify you as you move throughout the world at large.

“I wish for you a family of love and peace, filled with kindness, warmth, caring and laughter; a family of contentment that includes the traditional joys of simplicity, beauty, truth and commitment, healthy, and in harmony and balance with the rhythms of life. And it is my very special hope that you will know how to stand by your children when they need you, and then how to stand aside when it is time to do so. Finally, my wish is that you will always be able to say to one another, often and heartfelt: ‘because you love me, and because I love you, my life is enriched and made thereby more wonderful.’”

Readings:

[Ellen and Danny read from selected poetry.]

Music:

["True Companion" by Mark Cohn is heard.]

Vows:

[Nick:] "Anne Marie: I want you to know I love you with all my heart. You have brought so much love, happiness and sunshine into my life. You showed me how to live and open myself to others. You showed me I can be or do whatever I want in life and you would be there for me and support me in any way you could. Know that I am still learning to live and want to learn to grow with you. I will always try to be supportive of you and help you in any way I can. I will always be faithful to you. I want our love for each other to go on and continue to grow for the rest of our lives. I love you." [He places his ring on Anne Marie's hand.]

[Anne Marie:] "I suggested writing our own vows because the traditional wedding vows are just that— traditional. They are not personalized, individualized to fit the couple being married; they're vague. I want us to be personal today, and share all the feelings that we have for each other with each other here in the presence of our friends and families.

"There has never been a moment since we met that you weren't in my mind and heart. No one I know— no one here today— knows me and understands me as well as you do. I look forward to spending my life with you, sharing everything I am with you, and building a family together.

"From all of the experiences we have already shared, I form these vows: I promise to support you in any decisions that you make, to encourage you in every effort that you make, and to love you unconditionally, no matter what the circumstances. I promise to never take you for granted, and to let you know each day, through gestures and words, how much I love you. I promise to be honest, but not brutally honest, about everything, and to always try to speak kindly to you.

"And lastly, my most important promise to you is this: I will never stop living out these vows, and I will see this relationship through every challenging event that we may encounter. No matter how difficult things may seem to be, I will never give up on us, because what you and I share is worth every effort to nourish and preserve. I love you, Nick." [She places her ring on Nick's hand.]

Pronouncement and Benediction:

"Then, Nick, Anne Marie: having heard your vows exchanged and sealed by these rings that you have given one another, and with the power that is vested in me, I do witness and affirm your union of love, and pronounce you husband and wife. God bless you both." [To Nick:] "You may now kiss your bride."

Recessional:

[Anne Marie returns up the aisle with Nick, Ellen is escorted by Danny, and Jim follows.]

John and Janet

Processional:

[The wedding party gathers informally on the green at Lower Jack Rabbit Meadows near Spring Lake.]

Greeting:

"Jan and John have asked you to be here today, to take part in this wedding, because this is how they want to start their married life together, in the presence of their most special friends and family."

Reading:

“As we view things, the world is too vast to measure; however, we find a solemn law in the light of Buddha’s wisdom. This law means the occurrence of cause and effect. The law of cause and effect determines people’s roles as parents and children, brothers and sisters, and husbands and wives. Because of this, we should not disregard the fact that Jan, the bride, and John, the groom, are to become husband and wife as a result of a deep relationship from the past; of a cause made in their past lives, not merely a recent coincidence in their lives. Harmony is the most valuable product of any marriage. A husband and wife blend themselves and become one, thus transforming two separate lives into a perfect union. But life is not always peaceful. Realistically speaking, you may face difficulties from time to time. Nevertheless, by building a happy family with the firm spirit of one mind and one body, you can overcome any difficulty.

“The husband is like the pillar of a house; the wife, the beam. The husband is like the legs, while the wife is like the body; the husband is like the wings, while the wife is like the body of the bird. If the wings and body are separated, how can the bird fly? If the pillar has fallen to the ground, the beam falls down with it. If one is not at home, then the family has, so to speak, ‘lost its heart.’

“To become a wife is to let the husband support by supporting him. When one is happy, the other will be fulfilled. It is not only in this lifetime, but in life after life, eternally, that husband and wife are like shadow and body, flower and fruit, root and leaves. A worm that lives on a tree eats the tree; fish that live in water drink the water; when grass dies, orchids cry; and when the pines flourish, oaks rejoice. Even trees and grass are so closely related. There is in tradition a bird with one body and two heads, and both mouths nourish the same body; there is also a fish with only one eye, so that the male and female remain together for life. A husband and wife should be like this.” [From the Nichiren Daishonin]

Vows:

[Jan:] “You are my best friend, my lover and my companion, my soul mate and my safe harbor. You give me courage to challenge myself, and the desire that we may grow old together. I bring to this relationship my love, my patience, my creativity, my open heart, and my attentive ear. In this union I ask that there be love, laughter, and the sharing of our joys, our troubles, and our dreams.”

[John:] “You are my strong foundation, my lover, my loyal best friend, my conscience and my inspiration. I offer you my vision and my effort, and more: I offer you my sense of humor, my loyalty and commitment, my unconditional love, and my continuing care for your children. And in this union let there be the understanding that comes of good communication, and the provision of a good home and a good life for our family.”

Ring Exchange:

[This is done in silence. John takes his ring for Jan from Bill, takes Jan’s left hand in his own left hand, and places his ring on her finger, thereby offering himself to her; she then adjusts the ring so that it fits comfortably in its rightful place on her hand, thereby accepting his offer. She then takes her ring for John from Nancy, takes John’s left hand in her own left hand, and places her ring on his finger, thereby offering herself to him; he then adjusts the ring so that it fits comfortably in its rightful place on his hand, thereby accepting her offer.]

Pronouncement:

“With the authority vested in me, I now pronounce you husband and wife.”

Benediction:

“May the Source of all life sustain your life together, and fill it with many blessings. May Its radiance be a continuing presence in your life, to touch it with grace and beauty. And may your life be a long one together, filled with health, happiness, love, and peace. Peace in your home, and peace in your hearts. God bless you both—you may now kiss your bride.”