

Holy Matrimony

June 26th, 2021

Sherry Marie Bevirt ~ Russell Frederick Gross IV

You chose well, Ricky. Ricky is one-for-one. No one has a higher percentage of choosing perfectly a partner for life, a bride of priceless beauty. No holy house in all the land has more joy than this place, this day. Who cares if you wrecked yourself playing voccis! Who cares if you can barely walk! I'm pretty sure that Ricky could float if we asked him to. There's one reason for that. The delightful and deep and dreamy Miss Sherry Marie is giving herself to Ricky this day. It is beautiful. This radiant bride, this living portrait of Christ's church – she is beautiful. The setting, the company, the music, the classic richness of a wedding – beauty is draped all over this day, this moment. This blessed assembly is so happy for you, so pleased to be witnesses to the beginning of a common life together.

Beauty enriches one's life. We all know what is beautiful. A misty haze settling around the San Bernardino Mountains at sunset; a nine-month-old little girl in a sundress taking her first cautious but happy steps; Michelangelo's Pieta; a young man helping an old woman navigate her way; the thrill on a little boy's face when his father comes home from deployment – beauty enriches our lives. Truly, we have a physical reaction to great beauty – our pulse increases, capillaries in our brains enlarge to flow more blood, and, most pertinent today, our eyes dilate. Beauty is in the eye. The beholder apprehends what is authentically beautiful and life is enriched.

We all are enriched this day. Beauty is on display. Marriage, at its core, is beautiful, inherently beautiful. As enchanting as you are, there is something deeper in the air than simply a very becoming couple exchanging rings and tasting marriage's first kiss. Oh, the world may not see it, but we do. Our eyes behold the substance of marriage. Adam and Eve, our first parents, were created for each other. Love, camaraderie, support, complementarity, union – two becoming one flesh – and they were beautiful, they were holy. Sin cratered their lives and paradise was lost. Support became blame, self-giving became its ugly opposite, life was replaced by death. As familiar as we are with beauty, we are equally acquainted with what is dreadful. This world is broken. Man is fallen. Woman is fallen. Avarice, narcissism, deceit, violence – these are not minor blemishes on humanity's complexion. Objectively, in our sin, we are a horrific sight.

The eye of our Beholder, the eye of the One who called light out of darkness, who hung the planets and gave the proud waves their boundaries – what does He see? By virtue of what He saw He sent His Son; formed not from the dust of the earth but conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. The eternal Son of God came in search of a bride. No suitable helper was found for Him – no holy bone of His bones, no pure flesh of His flesh. Oh, but His love was active. Beauty is found in Him. Crucified, He pours out His life, His blood. It is a horrific sight, the Son of God bearing our sin. The eyes in our heads would look away. The eyes of our hearts dilate to take in more of His beauty, more of His glory, more of His love.

Faith knows; His blood is shed for me. Faith knows; His blood is shed to wash me, to cleanse me, to prepare for Himself a Bride, a church. The Lord Christ renders Himself up to the Holy Cross to gain for Himself a bride He can call His own. He dies to make what is wretched holy

and beautiful. He dies to lay claim to a bedraggled and forlorn people. By Christ's sacrifice, we who were far off because of our sin have been brought near. Union with Him. Union with God! A life to share. A life that goes beyond this temporal sphere. Fallen humanity's self-serving water is changed into sacrificial wedding wine. We are intoxicated with the beauty of it. It is that sacrificial love which lies beneath this ceremony, this couple, this day. Your eye is blessed to behold it.

Sherry, you have chosen well. This dear man, this steadfast, devout, kind, supportive, hard-working man loves you. As Christ loved the church, so this man loves you. He will gladly die for you, to protect and defend you. I asked Ricky, why Sherry? Why this Midwest teacher, this farm girl, why this particular young filly? He's kind of poetic, your Ricky. "You give up one thing for something better." So said your groom. In perfect St. Paul fashion, your Ricky would give up all that he is, all he has to gain you. St. Paul listed all of his supposed Jewish strengths and then summarized: "Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss (useless rubbish compared to knowing Christ) for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8). You, as a woman, a wife, a life-partner, to Ricky you are the Pearl of Great Price, the Wife of Noble Character and the Beloved of the Song of Solomon all rolled into one. Your groom knows, you are the one who will help him grow in the faith and realize his potential as a man.

Young lad, I asked Sherry, why Ricky? Why this tree-climbing, adrenaline junkie? Why this adventurous nomad, this restless wind of a man? Sherry is well-considered. She listed your attributes in exhaustive and precise detail. This woman knows you, bro. She sees the virtue of your character, your Christ-like disposition, your attentiveness to her needs and others'. She trusts you. She already sees how her life in the future will be, based on what you have shown her. As the church trusts Christ, so your bride trusts you.

People are running away from the truth. Nowhere is this more the case than in regard to marriage. Ricky and Sherry are running toward the truth, toward Christ, and it is beautiful. The beauty of the Gospel lends itself to this occasion, this union. In Holy Matrimony, we are elevated above the poor impulse to live for ourselves. The death we all deserve because of our sin, Jesus suffered for us. He is the Beautiful One. Forgiveness is found in Him; life is found in Him, salvation is found in Him, freedom is found in Him – being free to love as He loves. We love because He first loved us. That beauty fills our eyes. Beauty and forgiveness are both tethered to Christ's cross.

The forgiveness of sins is, at the very inception of your marriage, central to your future. Marriage is tough. Life is tough. You will need each other; unlike anything you can yet imagine – you will rely on one another, gain strength from one another, be emboldened to stand tall by one another. And you will fail. Each of you will fail to be the perfect spouse. Forgive one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. In this way you will be an ongoing epiphany of beauty – genuine beauty for the eyes that will behold your marriage. When others see this forgiveness, they will be enriched; they will know that it is the Lord of the cross who animates your life together.

Life is out there, beyond this day, beyond this assembly, beyond this holy house. Christ and His church are out there for you – that is to be your home, your beautiful home. It is Jesus who calls you to Himself. Abide in my love, says the Easter King. Live in it, hear of it, inwardly digest it, become beautiful through it. Greater love has no one than this, that He lay down His life for His friends. His beauty is in you for His love, clearly, His love is in you. Our eyes behold it and we are enriched.