

## Wedding Homily for Casey Trask & Alex Quick Aug. 5, 2017

- In the sacrament of marriage, we start with a universal aspect of human life. *In one form or another*, marriage is found in every part of the world. Then, in the context of our Faith, we join the natural phenomenon of marriage with some very particular language and liturgical practices. As we do, *we take something common and generic in significance, and transform it with supernatural meaning. This is just what we do, in every Eucharist*, when we take ordinary bread and wine, and transform them with liturgical prayer.
- Think for a moment about our *liturgical* celebrations of marriage. Consider the words we use, and the fancy clothes *we put on*, especially when we are in church. *Dressed in a special way, we step through these doors, and say some things that we don't really say in other circumstances.*
- By contrast, consider things we say and hear at *other* times, and in lots of other places. We sometimes speak of people '*putting on airs*,' or of how—in a *difficult situation*—we might *put on* what we call a '*game face*.' And most of us have experienced a situation where we felt like someone was '*putting us on*.' None of these examples refers to anything positive, and all three strike us as unattractive because of the taint of superficiality or deceit. As my father used to joke, *be sincere whether you mean it or not! But here*, in a *church* celebration and blessing of a marriage, we expect *real* sincerity and *genuine* commitment, both of which we associate with honesty and truth.
- Paul, in our Epistle reading, uses this language of '*putting on*,' or of '*clothing*' ourselves.<sup>1</sup> He is talking about an entirely *different* and *positive* form of *putting on*, when he urges us to put on our *new life* in Christ. For Paul, '*putting on Christ*,' by *clothing ourselves with love*, is a metaphor for what happens *when we put on Baptismal garments*. When we put on Baptismal garments we are reminded of new life ~ the new life that comes from dying with Christ, and from rising again with him. *Nothing could be more sincere, nor as deeply connected with who we are, than our*

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Baptismal transformation. There is no separation between the *inner* and *outer* person, nor between *soul* and *body*. These deep connections have direct implications for how our beliefs shape our actions; and for how our deepest commitments structure how we actually live.

- *In the wisdom* of the Church's liturgy, a reading referring to [Baptism](#) is chosen as a reading for [Marriage](#). This tells us something important about the intimate connection between Baptism and Marriage. [When we are baptized we are joined inseparably with Christ. And when we are married we are called to see our union in the same terms](#), as equally involving of our whole being with that of our spouse.
- Let's take this a step further. Historians tell us that [our common expectation that brides wear white has a modern origin](#). Apparently, [Queen Victoria set the precedent](#), and her choice became widely imitated. She had some white lace that she particularly valued, and wished to be married in a dress that would match it. Yet [her conscious preference might have been linked with an unconscious association](#). In Western European and N. American culture, [we associate white with spiritual purity and innocence](#), precisely the virtuous qualities we associate with newly baptized persons. And so, *unless you are a Chinese bride who would likely choose red*, wedding gowns are almost always white.
- It's *therefore not an accident* of history that [both clergy and acolytes wear white albs or a white surplice, both reminding us of Baptismal gowns](#). And *where might* the practice of wearing white for Baptism come from? Surely it is not only due to *our symbolic association* with the *abstract* qualities of purity and innocence. Though I cannot point to historical evidence for the connection, I believe that there is [a more concrete precedent for white as our color for Baptismal garments. It is the burial shroud of Jesus, left behind in the tomb upon his resurrection](#). When Christians put on white liturgical garments, *this should always be our first reference point*.

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- Think of how we often choose to put on a white Baptismal gown when we are joined with Jesus' death and resurrection. We put on Christ in the sacrament of initiation. And when we put on Christ, we are doing so much more than donning *new clothing*. For *we are putting on a new life, as a new person in Christ*. It has the deepest connection with *who we are*, with *who we were made to be*, and with who, *through Christ*, we are in the process of *becoming*.
- Whether or not a bride or a groom wear white, *what we take on* in the sacrament of marriage *has just as much to do with who we are*, and with who *through Christ* we are called to become. *All of us are called to clothe ourselves with Christ*. But it is especially appropriate for brides and grooms to think of themselves as putting on Christ, as they join one another in marriage.
- Paul does not leave us wondering *what this means in daily life*. For he names the specific *virtues and spiritual practices that manifest the Risen Jesus in our lives, and in our relationships*. His words apply equally to those who are single and who live in Christian community, as they do to those who find themselves called to marriage. His words apply to the vocation of public service as much as they do to relationships in private life. In several places in his letters—in *Romans, Galatians, Ephesians and Colossians*—Paul's message to *all of us* is this: *"put on Christ!"* And put on *the new life* that comes with your Baptism.<sup>2</sup>
- We put on Christ in two related ways. *First we clothe ourselves with Christ in the sacrament of Baptism*. Then, in our life that follows, *we let the word of Christ dwell in us richly and unhindered*. When we do, we let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. *Putting on, or clothing ourselves with, Christ* is therefore so much more than putting on a familiar garment. *For by putting on Christ, we are therefore clothing ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience*. The result is that *we bear with* one another, *and forgive* each other, just as the Lord has forgiven us.<sup>3</sup>

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- **Casey and Alex:** We join you in prayer this day, as you ask for God's blessing upon your marriage. *May you always put on Christ together.* And may your home always be a place of blessing, for you, and for all those with whom you share your life.

→ Invite the congregation to remain seated. Invite the couple, along with the Bridal Party, to come and stand at the rail.

Colossians 3:12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, **clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience**. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, **clothe yourselves with love**, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> "Put on" and "clothe yourself" are both appropriate translations of the wording in Colossians 3:12-17. Also see Romans 13:14; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:24ff. As Paul writes, in Gal. 3:27, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (ESV); "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (NRSV).

<sup>2</sup> See endnote 1, above.

<sup>3</sup> The content of this paragraph is closely based upon quotes from and paraphrases of our Epistle reading, Colossians 3:12-17.