

Celebration of Holy Matrimony

Uniting

Kohl Trahan and Hannah Kaczor

Saturday, May 28, 2022

5:30 p.m.

Hannah chose the vestments I'm wearing today, as is the bride's prerogative at every wedding. We found the maker of these vestments from a benefactor of ours from Canada, who bought for us our rose set. On the day I met this man, I asked him where he was from; and he told me, "Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, but my family was expelled in 1783, after the Revolution, because we were loyalists; so we live in Nova Scotia today."

I met Kohl's dad yesterday for the first time, and he told me his family is from Nova Scotia, also. The Trahan family, of course, has lived in Louisiana for well more than two hundred years, but they lost their land in Canada during the Great Expulsion between 1755 and 1764, when all but three thousand of the Acadian people were forcibly deported from what is today the Maritime provinces and the State of Maine. In transit, five thousand of them died from shipwrecks, disease, and starvation. Others made it to Saint-Domingue, only to be massacred during the Haitian genocide in 1804. The fortunate ones, including Kohl's ancestors on both sides of his family, made it to Louisiana before it was even part of the United States. And today the nine thousand survivors number nearly a million people; and we hope and pray that because of this marriage that number will grow, a testament to the truth that life and love are stronger than enmity and death. As the Song of Solomon reminds us today, "*Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.*"

How does one survive such barbarities, the indiscriminate targeting of men, women, and children alike, not because of any proven guilt, but because they spoke a different language? We survive, by God's grace, the same way the Cajun people did, through their faith in Jesus Christ. Indeed, the reason for the expulsion of the Acadians was their refusal to take an oath of loyalty to the English King, which would have constituted a violation of their consciences. First, the Mi'kmac Indians were their friends but England's enemy, and second, the Acadians certainly didn't want to take up arms against their allies or their French brothers. But the oath of loyalty would also have required them to deny their faith, which at that time was illegal everywhere in the British Empire except here, in Pennsylvania.

"*Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb,*" we heard in our lesson from Revelation; and truly it can be said that the Acadian people were willing to suffer deprivation, deportation, and death at the hands of the English, sooner than they were willing to give up the Mass, the marriage supper of the Lamb into which we enter before the altar every single day. They were invited; they knew they were blessed; and they endured untold suffering so that it could never be said they had refused so generous an invitation. In doing so, they have been blessed even more, and have outlasted the English, who are in North America no longer and shall never return.

Again, Hannah and Kohl. Even if our friend, Jim Hilber, does live on the land the British stole from your ancestors, your union, and the children with which we hope God will deign to bless you, are a testament to the truth that faith, hope, and love are more powerful than all the trials our adversary may use in his attempts to destroy life. Your life together, this wedding, is a sign that points us to Him who wins in the end, He who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Thus, I am pleased that you chose for your wedding the Gospel that reads, *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* You understand implicitly that this life to which you aspire will not be easy, that to do things the right way is often derided and denigrated, when not dismissed as impossible. So you know not to listen to the lies, but to the promises we just heard in the Beatitudes, that for your choice you will be blessed. You will be comforted, you will be satisfied, you will obtain mercy, and you in fact will see God, not as in a mirror dimly, but face to face. You will know as you are now known, for your reward is great in heaven.

You are saying yes today, and we are proud of you, especially in an age when so many of your peers hesitate or outright tell God, “No.” But those of us who have been married a while know that you’ll have to wake up every single day and say yes. That’s why you’re about to tell all of us, “I will, I will, I will, I will,” four times that extend from now until that day one of you must bury the other. And as you weep, you’ll look even then to your reunion in heaven, God’s will for you, because you believed and lived the promises.

You can tell my dad was a history major, and even before I’d graduated from high school, Pop had taught me a thing or two about the Acadian people. But until I met Kohl, my knowledge was ephemeral; and he is the first Cajun from Louisiana I ever met in my life. After we had dinner with him and Hannah for the first time, I told my wife I nearly cried tears of joy right at the table, because I have known for decades what his ancestors suffered, and it is the grace of God that he even exists. The fact that he wants to marry my niece and start a family with her is icing on the cake, for it represents the extension of graces for so many more to receive.

Hannah and Kohl, you are the beneficiaries of that grace, graces communicated because those before you said yes again and again. We give thanks today that their sacrifices have issued in this moment of joy for you. That is the heritage you have inherited, that to be true to Jesus and the blessings that flow from the marriage supper of the Lamb, we will carry our cross so others may live. We are rightly proud of such ancestors. Please know that all of us here today, and many more, will be praying that your yeses will likewise continue to make us proud. May your free choice to be faithful become so fruitful that your descendants thank God for the grace within you.