

The Wedding of Joey and Wendy!

September 24, 2005

Opening/invocation

Blessed are you who have come together today to celebrate this happy occasion. We have gathered together to celebrate the wedding of Wendy and Joey, the twining-together of two lives and two families. These two stories had separate beginnings, but from today forward they form one narrative, of which we are all a part.

Havdalah

In Judaism it is traditional to mark the end of the Sabbath with a brief set of blessings called *havdalah*, "separation." We bless wine, fragrant spices which recall the pleasures of Shabbat, and a braided candle which represents the intertwining of Sabbath and week; we bless God Who distinguishes between sacred moments and ordinary time. Tonight, though we celebrate havdalah to begin the ordinary week, surely we are transitioning from sacred time to sacred time!

Baruch Atah, Adonai, eloheynu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, creator of the fruit of the vine.

Barich Atah, Adonai, eloheynu melech ha'olam, borei minei b'samim.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, creator of all the spices.

Baruch Atah, Adonai, eloheynu melech ha'olam, borei m'orei ha-esh.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, creator of the light of fire.

Baruch Atah, Adonai, eloheynu melech ha'olam, hamavdil bein kodesh l'chol: bein or l'choshech, bein yom ha-shvi'I l'sheshet y'mei ha-ma'aseh. Baruch Atah, Adonai, hamavdil bein kodesh l'chol.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, ruler of the universe, who separates sacred from profane, light from darkness, the seventh day of rest from the six days of labor. Blessed are You, who separates sacred from profane.

[braided candle is extinguished in the havdalah wine]

Wine

In Judaism, wine is a symbol of joy. We bless wine at every festive occasion, to remind ourselves that life is sweet and that we sanctify our days by celebrating what is joyful. Today Wendy and Joey will share one cup, to signify their coming-together as a family.

Baruch Atah, Adonai, Eloheynu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessed are You, Adonai, Source of all being, creator of the fruit of the vine.

Unity candle

According to Filipino custom, we will now ask two of Joey and Wendy's sponsors, Paul Baranowski and Rob Strickler, to light the pillar candles on either side of the chuppah. These candles represent the lights of heritage, tradition, and love with which Wendy and Joey have been blessed.

Take the flame from the candles which your sponsors have lit, and light the unity candle here beneath the chuppah. This center candle is a sign that a new family has been formed today, blending all of the love, traditions and experiences you have shared with your individual families.

Coins

In accordance with Filipino custom, I'd like to invite Richard Choi and Jennifer Newland, two of Wendy and Joey's sponsors, to bring us the ceremonial coins.

Joey, your parents passed these coins between them when they were married, and your grandparents, before them. As you hold them together with Wendy, may they represent the abundance and blessing in your lives which will now be shared between you.

[Joey to Wendy, repeating after Rachel]

Wendy, accept these coins as a sign of my commitment to our household.

Rings/Vows

These rings mark the beginning of a long journey filled with wonder, surprises, laughter, tears, celebration, grief, joy. May these rings glow in reflection of the warmth and love which flow through the wearers today.

[Wendy, prompted by Rachel]:

I give you this ring as a symbol of the love I have for you.

[Wendy's vows — alas, not available for reprinting]

[Joey, prompted by Rachel]:

I give you this ring as a symbol of the love I have for you.

[Joey's vows — alas, not available for reprinting]

Veil/Cord

I'd like to call up the veil sponsors, Joey's cousins Freddie and Rachel Leelin, and Joey's cousins Saturnino Ador Dionisio III and Jamie Ly to assist with the cord.

Let this veil be a symbol of the faithful love you have for each other. Like the chuppah under which you stand, this veil covers you two in one cloth, symbolizing the home you will build together.

May this cord link you through all the days of your lives, connecting you across distance and time, and may you always know the joy of that connection.

Reading of ketubah

On the first day of the week, the twenty-first day of the month of Elul, in the year 5765, which corresponds to the twenty-fourth day of the month of September, in the year 2005, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the groom, Jose Martin, son of Maria Antonina and Guillermo, and the bride, Wendy, daughter of Marlene and Barry Nathan, entered into a mutual covenant of marriage before God and these witnesses and said each to the other: "I betroth you to me forever. I betroth you to me in everlasting faithfulness. I will be your loving friend as you are mine. Set me as a seal upon your heart, like the seal upon your hand, for love is stronger than death. And I will cherish you, honor you, uphold and sustain you in all truth and sincerity. I will respect you and the divine image within you. I take you to be mine in love and tenderness. May my love for you last forever. May we be consecrated, one to the other, by these rings. Let our hearts be united in faith and hope. May our hearts beat as one in times of gladness as in times of sadness. Let our home be built on understanding and loving-kindness. May our home be rich with wisdom and reverence." This ketubah has been witnessed and signed according to tradition. It is valid and binding.

[then remove cord and veil]

Homily (written & delivered by Reverend AKMA)

“The Internet is what brings us together, tonight.”

The next time somebody tells you that technology will destroy our civilization because nobody actually talks to other people any more, remind them about this evening. Although Joey and Wendy didn't exactly meet online, the Internet played a vital role, several vital roles, in bringing this holy occasion about. I became acquainted with Joey online; Wendy was working at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society, and the three of us converged on the same place at the same moment as part of a conference on blogging. If – as we are taught – marriages are determined in heaven before we are born, then God has been clearly been an early adopter of cutting-edge social software, for which we all have much reason to give thanks over and above the expected celebration of a marriage.

Indeed, there's a lot that's “over and above,” a lot that's excessive about this service. We surround the relatively simple human gesture of two people getting together with a remarkable assortment of elaborate ceremonies. After all, you don't need a huppah to move in together; you don't need candles to register your names with City Hall. Any old pop singer can marry any her childhood boyfriend with the approval of a bureaucrat, and fifty-five hours later she can unmarry him. No ninongs, no ninangs, no veil, no ketubah, no big deal.

It will not be so with us. Tonight, we indulge a proclivity toward excess; we ritualize extravagance. Tonight we observe the extraordinary ceremonies of two somewhat different families' traditions, we multiply them by each another, because the excess in our behavior signifies something greater, something grander, than a pop tart's legalized dalliance or a paper-pusher's authenticating stamp. Mere change-of-address forms and legalities fall far short of substantiating the promises that Joey and Wendy have made before us here. This is a love that exemplifies the words from the Song of Solomon:

Set me as a seal on your heart,
as a seal on your arm;
for love is strong as death.
Jealousy is as cruel as Sheol.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
a very flame of the Lord.
Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can floods drown it.

Tonight, Wendy and Joey bind their lives together with a bond stronger than the human will, strong even as death itself, trusting that the God who chose them for one another will sustain their love through storm and danger, through tedium and trial.

Their love, their covenant exceeds the bounds that a mortal vocabulary can define. So when we gather tonight, we express this pledge, this risk, with fire, we enact it with cord and veil, we celebrate it with ceremony and prayer. For in the presence of the offer and acceptance of utmost intimacy, we recognize a power in whose image we are made, we recognize the invitation that blesses us without coercion, we recognize the love that possesses us in our offering, sparks from a very flame of the Lord, a burning ring of fire from a holy mountain.

Through the loosely-joined connections of technological acquaintance, God has wrought the tightest and most glorious of unities. Tonight our extravagant celebration, feasting, music and dance, will light the heavens with our joy and thanksgiving for these our friends, our children, the newest and most wonderful wife and husband you could find anywhere – on the earth or online.

With joy in our hearts, we pray that God bless you, Joey and Wendy, and may you flourish in peace, joy, and prosperity forever.

Closing

We will close with the *shehecheyanu*, the Jewish blessing which sanctifies time, and which reminds us to exult in happy occasions. I invite those who know the words to join me in the blessing:

Baruch atah, Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higiyanu lazman hazeh.

Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Source of All, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this moment.

Breaking of the Glass

In a moment, Wendy and Joey will end their wedding ceremony with the Jewish tradition of smashing a glass. Explanations for this practice abound. Some say we break the glass in order that this marriage be as difficult to sunder as these shards would be to make whole again. Some say it's to remind us that even in our moments of greatest joy, somewhere in the world there is sorrow. Some say it's to scare away evil spirits, or to start off the marriage with a bang! Regardless, the appropriate response to the breaking glass is *mazal tov*, which means congratulations and good luck.

....MAZAL TOV!