

Archbishop Thabo Makgoba
Wedding of Brenda and Ezekiel
17 January 2009

Genesis 1:24-31a; Ephesians 3:14-19; Matthew 7:21, 24-27

May I speak in the name of Jesus, the rock of salvation on whom we build our lives.

Brenda and Ezekiel, it is such a joy for us all to share today with you, and to join the prayer of St Paul, that you will 'know the love that passes knowledge'.

This is a strange request – how can we know what is beyond knowing?

Yet it is a powerful reminder that human beings and human life cannot be reduced to what we can analyse with our brains. For who can explain love?

But we can experience love – and we can recognise and know it as love when we experience it.

Yet love is far more than floating together on a cloud of romantic sentimentality.

This love cannot deal with such vital questions as who will do the washing up, or tidy away the half-read newspapers, or who chooses which TV channel to watch *right now*, when *my* favourite team is playing just at the same time as *your* favourite serial. Yet these are the stuff of the everyday life of marriage.

Love is more than hearts alone, or heads alone – and so are human beings.

Jesus said the essence of humanity is to love God with all our hearts and minds and souls and strength, and to love others as ourselves.

True love encompasses every dimension of what it is to be human – our hearts and minds, certainly; our souls, our very deepest sense of self; and, of course, our bodies.

True love interacts between all these dimensions – our heads can give us the will-power to act in loving ways, even when we are tired or when life and work wear us down.

True love reminds us we do not need to feel roses and doves, in order to provide a listening ear, a warm hug, a shoulder to cry on. We can just choose to do that, and be there for each other, on the same side, no matter what we face.

Today you are choosing this sort of love – the love that is there through thick and thin; or to put it in the words you will shortly exchange, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health.

The God who is love says that no example of human love comes closer to divine love, covenant love that is there for us unconditionally, than this - than the very best of love shared between a couple in marriage, love that never gives up, whatever the circumstances.

Today we pray that you will be rooted and grounded in such love, and that over the years you will come to explore the fullness of the breadth and length and height and depth of this love, which is God's gift, as St Paul wrote.

This is what we all wish for you today.

For a wedding is not only the pledge of love and faithfulness between a couple.

It is also the pledge that we who love you and care for you make as we are gathered here – that we will support you in this new chapter of your lives.

For marriage is a public commitment, not just a private undertaking. Today you commit yourselves to live in covenant love with one another, and in your marriage you will be icons of that love before the face of the world. And for our part, it is the role of society to act in support of marriage, as the corner-stone of community life.

Just as you are here to say 'Yes' to sharing ever more deeply all that lies ahead – so we too say 'Yes' to supporting you as you build your marriage upon rock.

Since I moved to the splendours of Bishopscourt, my eyes have been opened to the strength of Jesus' parallel between building a house, and building our lives.

Bishopscourt is an old house that has stood the test of time. But I have discovered that one cannot take its solid foundations for granted, and that the work involved in the maintenance and upkeep of such a house never ends!

One must make a continuous effort to look after and care for what one has, for this is the best and only way to keep it in prime condition!

And, just as for houses, so too for marriages: for we never know what storms may come along, and so we hope that the life we build will make us ready to withstand them.

But sometimes we can be left quite battered – and therefore, it is an even greater joy when the God of new beginnings brings about new life, new hope, new love.

We rejoice with you, Brenda and Ezekiel, that you have found each other, and that you can build a new life together.

And as we see you make these pledges, we dare to pledge ourselves to build on rock in every aspect of our own lives. We commit ourselves to be rooted and grounded in all that is true and good – not only in our marriages, but in the way

we treat all others – loving our neighbours as ourselves. And we pledge to pursue ‘the best’ not only for those we love, but for all of humanity, in business, in politics, in ethics, in seeking justice and peace for this nation, this continent, this world.

When God made the world, and us within it, it was filled with potential for good.

God calls us to be his partners in seeking the good – in living in love – not only in marriage, but in all of life.

And God will help us – because his purpose for all of us is that we should flourish in the sunshine of his love.

And today especially, his promise for you, Brenda and Ezekiel, is to fill you with the fullness of his love.

May it be so.

Amen.