

Traveling Companion: A Smashing Wedding Bash

Fr. Michael Tracey

A long stretch black limousine, with its tinted windows, pulled up outside the church. The driver, clad in his black pants and waistcoat, got out. He proceeded to open the doors of the limousine and several young men exited, dressed in black tuxedo pants and white shirts. On one arm they were holding a tuxedo jacket and in the other hand, an opened bottle of Miller *Lite* beer. Gingerly, they laid down the beer bottles and put on their tuxedo jackets. They gathered round, sipped some more beer and finally entered the church. It seems a wedding was about to begin.

The church was awash with the chatter of idle gossip as people gathered to celebrate an event. Some were dressed casually, some were more formally attired. The time for the wedding arrived and went. People queried the whereabouts of the bride. Some went in search of her and her bridesmaids. They found them, posing for pictures and putting on the final touches of make-up. Finally, twenty-two minutes later, the wedding began.

Someone rose to do a reading from Genesis – the story of the creation of Adam. A laugh ensued from among the groomsmen that spread among its members. No one else in church seemed to think of the story of the creation of Adam as a joke.

It seems the rest of the wedding at church was uneventful. The bride shed a tear or two. The groom looked lovingly into her eyes to assure her of his commitment for life. At the end, the couple kissed, the crowd cheered. Some, in the back, whistled as the couple exited into the street and a new life as a married couple.

Eventually, the photographer gathered them together for some formal photographs and they finally were on their way to the wedding reception and a life of hopeful bliss and a celebration of love and commitment.

The next morning, a lone figure appeared in the parking area of the church. The sound of broken beer bottles being swept up, tempered the still morning air. On the sidewalk, empty beer bottles stood like lone sentries, bereft of friends who had previously cuddled them with delight a few hours earlier.

Early Sunday morning Mass goers noticed the lone sentries and shook their heads, murmuring, “That must have been some kind of a wedding!” The beer bottle sentries seem to stick out their empty, slender necks and nod their baldheads in agreement. They wondered if anyone experienced an early morning hangover from the wedding celebration.

As we enter the season for weddings, one wonders if ritual takes precedence over rite; if trimmings take precedence over substance; if appearance takes precedence over ceremony; if expectations take precedence over celebration; if incidentals take precedence over presence; if photography takes precedence over the heartstrings; if rehearsals take precedence over the real thing; if distractions take precedence over the experience and if frivolity take precedence over the action of God in the sacrament.

In an age of individuality and fickle-mindedness; for some, it is easier for churches to be used for weddings, based on convenience rather than commitment; for ostentatious pandering rather than faith-expressing; for ambiance rather than celebration of faith; for the length of its main aisle rather than the length and enduring commitment expected; for privilege expression rather than powerful witness; for “show and tell” rather than “live well.” For others, it is an expression of faith owned, and a commitment pledged, as well as a God who is invited to walk with them throughout their married days and nights.

Maybe the only thing that should be “*lite*” at weddings should be its worries and the only thing heavy and challenging with responsibility, should be the commitment to self, spouse, world and God.