

7 October 2006
Marriage of Thelma Jones and Randy Myers

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

Jesu Juva

“Loving by Forgiving”

Almost exactly a year and a half ago, I stood in a room full of people and listened as TJ made a promise: to protect and defend this country as a Colonel in the United States Air National Guard. Today, TJ – and you, Randy – will be making a much more important and significant promise: to love, honor, and cherish each other as husband and wife. And not just for a three year hitch – but for the rest of your lives. You are promising each other today that I *will* love you . . . *no matter what*.

That’s a tall order! And one, quite frankly, that neither of you are capable of. Oh, right now, on this day, it seems not so hard! But when you mess up, when bad days interfere, when you get on each others nerves, when you get into a fight . . . it will be. *And then what?*

And so it is good that what is happening here today is not just a matter of the two of you making fragile and precarious promises to one another – but something much more significant: your Heavenly Father uniting you and making you something that you weren’t before – *one flesh*. And that means your marriage is not a partnership, a contract, an arrangement, or two people co-habiting – but a miracle. A work of God. A blessing from your Father.

And for this day your Father has been working. You were not aware of most of it, but He was working to bring you together. Over the years, through the sleepless nights, the wondering and the doubts, He was working – guiding you, shaping you, forming you, preparing you, doing always what was best for you . . . until that day a year or so ago, when at just the right time, He brought you together, *right over there!* For as our Father told us: *it is not good for the man to be alone*, but as God the Holy Trinity is love, and loves us, so He gives us His love to love one another.

But even more than that, your Father was working for you when He sent His Son to be our Saviour. **He** is the answer to the “*and then what?*” question I asked earlier! The answer to our sin and brokenness, because He came to take our sin and brokenness away from us. That the sin which divides and causes problems among us, and the brokenness of our relationships with one another, might be replaced with His love and restored by His forgiveness. And so He traded! His life for ours, His forgiveness for our sin, His

perfection for our brokenness. And so when Jesus died on the cross and then rose to life again, it was so that we too might be raised to a new life – a new way of thinking, a new way of living, a new way as a new creation.

And that restoring forgiveness that He has given you, and that you will give to one another, will be the heart and soul of your marriage. It is how you, Randy, will lay down your life for TJ. And it is how you, TJ, will submit to Randy. It is how you will give your lives for one another . . . *by forgiveness*. Forgiving and giving up your right for revenge and satisfaction. Forgiving and giving up your right to be right. Forgiving and letting go the hurt and restoring the other. For so you have been forgiven. And in restoring the other, you are really restoring yourself, for remember: you are no longer two, but one flesh.

And so it is not by candles or flowers or gifts that you will most show your love for one another – *it is by forgiveness*. And with that, your marriage will be an icon of the Gospel, and begin to model the marriage of Christ and His bride, the Church. That is the only “marriage made in Heaven” – yours will not be! You’re going to have ups and downs, times of great joy, times of struggle, and times of ordinariness. Your marriage won’t be perfect. . . . But that’s okay. It doesn’t have to be. You’re not getting married to be perfect, but to support one another, and help one another, and love one another, with the selfless, sacrificial, and unconditional love of Christ.

And so today we give thanks to our gracious God for both of you, for bringing you together, and for what He will do *for* you and *through* you in the future. Don’t rely on yourselves to make this marriage work – rely on Him who brought you together, who is today uniting you as one, and who has promised to give you all that you need. And He will! For He has given you Himself, and He *is* all that you need.

God’s richest blessings to you, from this day forward, and even forevermore.

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.