
'Tis the Season... For Weddings

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by the Very Reverend Sam G. Candler**

'Tis the season, but it's not the Christmas season. It's the season for weddings. Starting with the week after Easter Day, the Cathedral of St. Philip comes alive with wedding plans, wedding rehearsals, and, finally, wedding ceremonies. And if there is not a wedding occurring at the Cathedral, there's a good chance that one of our Cathedral priests is officiating at a marriage somewhere else. It's the season!

For some reason this year, I have been asked to officiate at more weddings than I usually commit to in a summer. At the Cathedral itself, we clergy take turns, week by week, being the designated priest for weddings. We always allow an engaged couple to choose any active priest of the Cathedral to perform their ceremony. But if they have no preference, the priest who is designated for the week does the officiating.

Speaking on behalf of all the clergy here let me say that we love to do weddings. People call on clergy for all sorts of things in life: to prepare for baptisms, to visit the sick, to officiate at funerals, all of which are holy occasions for us. Weddings, however, are some of the most joyous of holy occasions.

Many of you have already heard my claim about the Christian Church: that, over our history, we have worked out special liturgies, special services, which proclaim God's grace during the changes of our life. So it is that the Church shows up when babies are born, when we are ill, when we marry one another, when we die. The so-called "pastoral offices" of the Church occur at the natural and inevitable changes of our human lives. All of those changes, even the sad ones, can -and should- be occasions for grace in our lives. The church pronounces God's grace during those changes. So I end up with one of my reasons for the Church's existence: the Christian Church exists to show people how to change gracefully.

But, again, of all our pastoral occasions of grace, weddings are the most fun! It's fun to witness two people in love. It's fun to gather close friends and family together. It's fun to have parties. Weddings are a testimony to the fact that love is fun!

However, weddings are not just about love. They are about commitment. So I have been declaring a similar message to every couple at whose wedding I preside: The most important word that we speak at weddings is the word "will." I know that all the words are important, but I like the opening "Declaration of Consent" (see *The Book of Common Prayer*, page 424).

"N., will you have this woman/man to be your wife/ husband; to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to her as long as you live?" The answer is "I will." That word "will" does not indicate merely the future tense! I take it to be an act of volition and willpower! "I will this to happen!" So I tell my marrying couples, "Falling in love is wonderful! But real love is always a matter of will. To stay in love, we must will to love."

And it's not just the two people being married who "will" something. The next question is addressed to all family and friends and church present: "Will all of you witnessing these promises do all in your power to uphold these two persons in their marriage?" Their answer, too, is "We will!"

Tis the season for love, yes. But it is really the season for will. True covenants are about good will. I will say more about covenants later this summer. But, for now, let us rejoice in the covenant of marriage, which is to say, the "will" to marry. I salute all our couples who take this wonderful step of "graceful change" in their Christian life: to commit themselves to another person for life. We support you, we honor you, and we bless you!

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