

---

## *Two Trees Entwined*

**A wedding homily for Rachael Blackstone and Stanley Birch  
by the Rev. Canon George Maxwell**

Lo! Young we are and yet have stood  
like planted hearts in the great Sun of Love so long  
(as two fair trees in woodland or in open dale  
stand utterly entwined and breathe the airs  
and suck the very light together)  
that we have become as one,  
deep rooted in the soil of Life  
and tangled in the sweet growth.

These words were written by J.R.R. Tolkien, the English scholar best known as the author of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, to his wife, Edith, near the end of their long life together. His poem is more than romantic sentiment. It is a contemplative reflection on the mystery of marriage: two trees planted close, roots and branches entwined, drinking in the light together.

I can see why you chose it for this day. Let me share what I see in this image and then offer the blessing it holds.

Roots: Hidden Strength

Every tree stands because of what we cannot see. Roots reach deep into the soil, anchoring against storms and drawing nourishment from unseen sources.

The contemplative tradition has long pointed to roots as the secret of endurance. Visible life — leaves and fruit — depends on hidden life underground. So it is in marriage. What is unseen often matters most: small kindnesses, patient listening, daily forgiveness. These are the roots. Each seems small, but together they form the foundation on which everything else grows.

Turning Toward the Light

Trees live by turning toward the sun. The ancients saw them as living prayers: rooted in earth, reaching toward heaven, forever turning to the source of life.

Love is like this. A marriage cannot sustain itself. It needs light from beyond — call it love, grace, mystery, or God. When two people keep turning together toward what nourishes them, they discover a strength not their own. That is what Tolkien called “the great Sun of Love.”

Strengthened by the Wind

Foresters know: trees don't just survive wind and storms — they need them. Resisting the wind strengthens the wood, preparing it to bear the tree's later weight. Without wind, a tree cannot grow to its full height.

So it is in marriage. In dark times we learn most about ourselves and one another. We discover we can be fully known and still fully loved. The commitment you make today is what allows love to absorb the stresses of life and grow stronger because of them.

#### Branches Entwined

When trees grow side by side, their branches rub against one another. There is friction, yes, but also shelter and support. In time, it becomes hard to tell where one ends, and the other begins. This too is marriage. Two distinct lives, interwoven. And here lies one of its great joys: you will never be alone.

#### Shelter for Others

A great oak or a grove of birches becomes a world of life — birds nesting, creatures resting, travelers pausing for shade.

So it is with your marriage. What you build today is not only for you. It will become shelter for others: family and friends welcomed into your home, neighbors touched by your kindness, children who grow in your shade. Real love is always generous; it is the blessing that forever seeks to bless.

#### The Gift of Seasons

Trees know the wisdom of the seasons. Spring brings blossoms, summer fullness, autumn letting go, winter rest. Each season is necessary; each has its own beauty.

So it is with life together. There will be bright spring times of new beginnings, summers of abundance, autumns when you must release what you once held, winters when you endure quietly. You need not rush what is coming or cling to what has passed. Each season will bring its own life.

#### Mystery and Presence

To stand beneath a great tree is to feel awe. Trees are ordinary — rooted in soil like everything else — yet they carry mystery, dignity, even holiness.

One of Tolkien's contemporaries, the American poet Joyce Kilmer, famously wrote:

*I think that I shall never see*

*a poem lovely as a tree...*

*Poems are made by fools like me,*

*But only God can make a tree.*

Marriage is like that. Made of ordinary days, ordinary choices, ordinary gestures, it can reveal something extraordinary: a presence of love that connects us to what is greater than ourselves.

#### Blessing of the Trees

So, just as Tolkien used the image of two trees to honor his love for Edith, I offer you this blessing to name the gifts I trust God will give you in your life together:

May your love be like two trees planted side by side,  
roots reaching deep, branches entwined.

May you always turn toward the light,  
drawing strength from what is greater than yourselves.

May the winds that bend you make you strong,  
driving your roots deeper, thickening your love.

May your life together be a shelter,  
a place of welcome and peace.

And through every season,  
may you grow so closely intertwined  
that you cannot be pulled apart.

Amen.