

# The Real Show Stealer at the Royal Wedding Wasn't the American Preacher

Until a few hours before Saturday's Royal Wedding (and don't pretend you do not know which royals I am talking about) my attitude was roughly the same as [this staunch Brit's](#) – that is, I couldn't have cared less. But as the momentous hour drew near and I was still not asleep in my antipodean bed, I turned the telly on and watched. I was curious to see how this millennial couple, with their seemingly all too typical pre-marital experiences, and their 600 immediate witnesses would stand up to a high Anglican wedding service.

Many commentators have said that Bishop Michael Curry, the black Episcopalian prelate who gave a rousing [homily on love](#), “stole the show”. For my money, the “show” stealer was the Book of Common Prayer. Even in the modernised version used for Harry and Meghan's wedding (compare the [ancient form](#) used for William and Kate) something of the beauty and solemnity of Anglican ritual resonated in the addresses, prayers and blessings read by the Dean of Windsor. What could have been merely a toff's show in a splendid old church was thus lifted – will-nilly – to the plane of a religious event.

God, repeatedly invoked as the Blessed Trinity, was the ultimate witness of the event, the couple being assured of his power and guidance. Marriage itself, the assembly was reminded, is “a gift of God in creation through which husband and wife may know” his grace; and the marital union a reflection of Christ's union with his bride, the Church.

Bishop Curry, by contrast, preached in broad, inclusive terms about love, bringing a warmth and informality to the service which delighted some and nonplussed others, notably some

members of the Royal Family. Though his references ranged widely, from Martin Luther King and the struggle for justice, to the Jesuit scientist Teilhard de Chardin on the discovery of fire, he strangely overlooked what is unique about marital love: the generation of children and the sacrificial love of parents.

The Prayer Book, of course, mentions procreation specifically, and in the original version, as the first purpose of marriage as “ordained” by God.

At a time when cohabitation (before or without marriage) is more or less taken for granted in the West, and when, in the UK, [nearly half](#) of children are born outside marriage or civil partnerships, the wedding congregation – and the world – was told that marriage is “given as the foundation of family life in which children are born and nurtured and in which each member of the family, in good times and in bad, may find strength, companionship and comfort,” and a “sign of unity and loyalty which all should uphold and honour,” that “enriches society and strengthens community.”

Moreover, it is meant to be permanent and exclusive. The couple were obliged to plight their troth to each other “till death us do part, according to God’s holy law,” adding, “In the presence of God I make this vow.” They promised to give each other all that each is and has “within the love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

And, joining their right hands together, the Archbishop – looking rather stern, I thought – admonished all and sundry: “Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder.”

Finally, came a blessing invoking the riches of God’s grace and the blessings of eternal life.

Could anyone listen to all that and not be moved by the richness and beauty of the Christian vision of marriage – and perhaps spurred to reflection on their own marriage, or hopes

for marriage? Could Harry and Meghan not carry with them some of those wonderful phrases and ideals?

As a member of the Royal Family Harry would be used to church services and liturgical language and seemed to take it all in his stride. Meghan, divorced, and only baptised shortly before the wedding, carried it off with her lovely smile.

The Lord only knows how they will use it. But if they had no other instruction about marriage than what they received from the Prayer Book on their wedding day, they still have done ten times better than many of their generation will do. God bless them.

*Carolyn Moynihan is deputy editor of MercatorNet. This [article](#) has been republished under a Creative Commons license from Mercatornet.*

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