

XXXX and XXXX Homily

Wow, it's really happening! XXXX and XXXX, your friends and family have been looking forward to this day – perhaps the greatest day of your lives (so far) – since at least a year ago in June, when a certain ring was found after being thoughtfully placed next to a toothbrush in a medicine cabinet, two nights before the big bash – the annual XXXX Barbeque Bonanza. There was much to celebrate that day – a graduation, an engagement, a time of family, friends and fun – and there is much to celebrate today. There is not a pig to roast but there are many to toast, for this day is almost a decade in the making.

A boy from XXXX meets a gal from XXXX in no less a classy place than Scorekeepers Sports Grill and Pub. It has probably happened a thousand times, but on this particular occasion these two teens – yes, they were both 19 – caught each other's eye, or at least she caught his eye. To celebrate another win over Michigan State, he took her to that special place, Scorekeepers, for their first date – at least, in his mind. That next Wednesday they went to another classy place, that Thai restaurant on Washtenaw and 23, where, romantically, they were the only ones in the restaurant. The next Sunday he asked her to be his girlfriend. Yes, “that happened” (quoting XXXX), and the rest, they say, is history.

There were many library dates where they became special study buddies. There were many Michigan football and basketball games, full of tears, cheers and perhaps a few jeers. They shared a life path of going to college and then graduate school at the same time, although with one key difference: XXXX would venture south to that red state to go to law school. He had XXXX's permission to brave buckeye country, but with one caveat: “Buy a shirt, and it's over!” If they can survive being apart in rival schools if not states, then they have a good chance to survive what lies ahead.

And who knows what lies ahead? Beyond Bali and Bangkok, there are dreams to visit South Africa on safari, Dubai and the Maldives, Costa Rica, Rio, Ireland and

Scotland, Greece and other parts of... Europe. (I may have just made a political statement there!) They would like to get outdoors more and go camping, which may be difficult living in Chi-town. There they hope to grow their careers, she in dentistry and he in his family's real estate business, and perhaps one day start a family.

For a couple that claims they never talked about marriage before getting engaged, they certainly have been a delightful, committed couple. Today gathering of family and friends is really a consummation of years of dating and bringing people together because of your love for one another. There is great admiration and mutual respect between you two.

XXXX, you love XXXX's work ethic, his calming presence, his support of whatever you do, his unwavering love for you, his respect for family. You think he'd make a great father, and I know many others would agree. You appreciate the way he makes you laugh – and he can be funny, sometimes – **and** how he balances out your emotions. For those of us who know XXXX, we know she can cry whether she's mad, sad or glad. Because you asked, I looked it up: Botox CAN block your tear ducts and it is highly NOT RECOMMENDED. Tears are healthy – may you have many joyful tears today and the rest of your days.

XXXX, you love how caring and compassionate XXXX is, always concerned about others. You could hang out all day with her, and have come to love her surprises, her early career success, her independence, her strength, her beauty, her smarts. You know she loves you deeply, and you certainly don't mind that she, too, is funny and cute. And to top it all off, she loves sports, even arranging fantasy lineups. Perhaps owning a sports franchise is in the works should the opportunity arise.

As you establish your roots in Chi-town, as you form traditions of your own, may the commitment you make today continue to strengthen and grow in the years ahead. We heard Carolina read Song of Songs, placing a seal on your lover's heart and arm.

Today's equivalent might be a tattoo, but no one is telling you to get one. But you are making a seal today, a sign that you belong to each other, and this commitment is as strong as death, and even stronger. For the same love that brought Jesus back from the grave will also resurrect your relationship again and again. These candles represent the enduring love from each of your families.

Though flames may flicker,
may your love-fire burn bright,
and be to others a light,
in a darkened world
that needs a hopeful sight.

And in Ecclesiastes we receive this wisdom: Two are better than one. There will times when one of you will fall. Humbly allow the other to pick you up. Keep each other warm, especially in the Windy City. Stand together strong when life's waves threaten to overcome you. For love is priceless, and for everything else, there's Mastercard. There will be tough decisions – never sell out on your dreams or the other's. You may need to take turns – where there's a will there's a way! – so never give up, just as you never give up on your sports teams.

Muhammed Ali said he was the greatest, but he was wrong. Love is the greatest.

I've heard it from many – You were meant for each other. You two were made for each other. Now you get to make the meaning. You are now committing to craft a life together, to foster a family, to grow in grace toward one another.

You may still plan your time together around Michigan football and basketball games, (thankfully no more studying!) but always remember: love is what lasts. Love is what comes first. For love is the greatest.