

Just before Anthony was born, Pope John Paul II made a visit to Ireland. Apart from a visit to his homeland, Ireland was one of the first countries the Pope from ~~Poland~~ ^{KRAKOW} was to visit. In more recent years many people from Poland have come to live and work in Ireland and the Polish people have found a special place in the affections of the Irish people. One Pole in particular has found a special place in the hearts of one Irish family and today we celebrate the love that Anthony and Angelika have found in each other.

You found each other in the fellowship of the Taize community and the European Meeting in Hamburg. But even prior to that, our two families, coming out of different traditions, different cultures, different life experiences, were drawn to the hill of Taize. We came to share in the life of a community in whose life differences in culture, in background and tradition are transcended by a common faith in Christ.

Your two mothers, Lydia and Rachel, who each brought you to birth, have read, in what are the two languages of your home, that passage from Ecclesiastes that speaks of a rhythm of life – you have found, in your individual strengths and weaknesses, a harmony in each other's lives and today you pledge yourselves to each other before God and his Church to share your times of loving and sharing, to work through your times of difference, to build a common life together as husband and wife..

This beautiful Church in which you are being married today in its own history brings together the Catholic and Protestant traditions in a story of reconciliation. The Crucifix, which I understand is the oldest in Krakow, points to a love that underpins our love for each other. In the passage from St John's Gospel that Andrzej and I have read, Christ tells his disciples, tells us, tells the two of you to 'love as I have loved you'

The preface that I read at the beginning of this service gives us some insight into this; 'It is God's purpose that, as husband and wife give themselves to each other in love through their lives, they shall be united in that love as Christ is united with his Church.'

That bond of love between Christ and his Church finds its ultimate expression in his self giving, self forgetting, self emptying, sacrificial love to which that crucifix points. Our love for each other must show something of that same self forgetting love of Christ himself, in which the needs of the other are placed above our own.

This is brought out in that lovely description of Christian love that we find in Paul's 1st Letter to the Corinthians:

'Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Anthony, Ashkie, this day we celebrate your love for each other and ask God's blessing upon you in all that lies ahead for you both. May you find in your self giving, self forgetting love for each other great joy and great strength and may God grant you long and happy years together.