

# A Wedding in Louvain, 1964

**Revelation 21, v. 5: Behold, I make all things new.**

**II Corinthians 5, v. 17: If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.**

*Martin and Ruth were married in a chapel of Louvain University by a Catholic priest, assisted by an Anglican priest who also preached the sermon. Here is the text of the address, given by the Revd Donald Allchin. It was preached in 1964 in the heady period of the Second Vatican Council, but it may equally speak to all interchurch couples who have married or will marry while our churches remain divided.*

A wedding is the most purely joyful of all the Church's sacraments. It is in the first place a sacrament of creation, instituted of God himself in the beginning of our race. It is the sacrament in which two people come together, and find in their life together the purpose for which God has made them. And in that finding there is great fulfilment and great joy. And it is necessarily and properly, in a unique way, a mixture of natural and supernatural, of human and divine, of this world and the world to come. It is something which touches us at every level of our being.

And in this sacrament God comes to meet us and says to us here, as at all times, Behold I make all things new, for if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.

Here today, as in every marriage, something new has come into existence. Before there were two people, perhaps very much in love, perhaps deeply pledged to one another, and yet two. And now they have come out from their own families, from their own past, and have come together into one, and are now husband and wife. And here we have the foundation of a new reality, of a new life together, the creation of a new Christian home.

All of us here pray, all of us here know that that home will be a centre of life and peace and love, because your love for one another is founded and made sure upon God's unshakeable love for you. Your faithfulness to one another is made certain by his unshakeable faithfulness which alone can support our weakness and fragility.

But if every marriage is in this way a sacrament of creation, and itself a new creation by God, every marriage which is in Christ must be marked by the signs of our redemption, must be inscribed within the cross and resurrection of our Lord.

And this is quite particularly true of your marriage today. For you have come together into one, not only out of two human families, but out of two different Christian families, and the difficulties and the tensions which must exist in any marriage, in the union of two distinct and different human persons, must inevitably be heightened, at times, by differences of a much larger and more impersonal nature. You have come into this union consciously, willingly, knowing already many of the difficulties which lie before you. How much greater then must be your love, your faith and your hope in the healing and reconciling power of God, who can and will make all things new; who will make out of the very difficulties of your vocation the way by which you may draw nearer to one another and to him; the way by which your life together may be fruitful in drawing many into the peace and reconciliation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And surely we who are here today are and will be united with you in your intention and purpose. We who have come together here, from many different Christian families, have found together in

common prayer how great is the unity which God has already given us. This service itself, this whole day, this house in which you met, are in different ways signs that it is God who says, Behold, I make all things new. God, the Creator, the Redeemer, the Sanctifier, the Fulfiller of our joy, who has brought you together, and who through the power of his all-holy Spirit works great signs in these days, which speak to us of his reconciling and renewing power. The Lord is calling you to a pioneer ministry, calling you out into new and untrodden ways, but we all here who are present, and how great a multitude beyond, are with you in seeking to follow that voice which itself creates the strength and power to go on.

Today we have kept the feast of St Mary Magdalen, a feast which is marked above all by two thoughts, the forgiveness of sins and the witness to the resurrection. May your marriage be marked pre-eminently by these two great realities. May your life be filled with the power of God's forgiving love, which will overflow the boundaries of your home, and be a source of blessing to many, many people. May your life be joyful with the light and power of our Lord's resurrection, a witness to the love of God which is stronger than death, to the power of God who makes all things new. And may he who today has brought you together as man and wife in the holy estate of matrimony bring us all of his great mercy to the unspeakable unity and rejoicing of his kingdom in heaven. Amen.