

A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

The Chapel

June is the month of weddings, and it never fails to remind me of my own wedding.

One time when my wife and I flew down to Maryland, we found ourselves attending Mass in the parish where we were married. We'd been back to the neighborhood many times over the years and passed the church often. We'd seen the roads nearby get repaved, and seen buildings go up around it. Still, the small church where we were married hadn't changed much since that May morning many years ago when we said "I do."

The church is a chapel, actually, built in the mid-1800s. A big modern church now stands next door, where they celebrate Sunday liturgies. But after we attended Mass, we decided to see if we could take a look at "our" chapel. We walked up to the old wooden door, gave a tug, and it opened. We looked at each other, smiled, and went in.

The place was empty. No lights were on, and no candles burned. It was much as I remembered it: an intimate building with a couple dozen wooden pews. The original marble altar was simple, with a golden tabernacle in the middle and carved angels on each side. We walked down the aisle and knelt before the altar and said a prayer together. My wife took my hand and whispered, "Let's redo our vows." And so we did, quietly, as if for the first time.

After a moment, I got up to look around. I went back to the sacristy: a tiny room, with a sink

and some cabinets and a couple of plain chairs. Twenty-five years earlier, I'd stood in that room, pacing with the priest and my best man, waiting for the music to start.

I stepped out and looked to where I'd seen my bride come down the aisle and remembered that I could barely see her, because everyone was standing, and I'm not very tall.

Standing there many years later, and looking around the chapel, I noticed some things were different. The carpet was new. So were the pews. The walls had probably been painted a time or two.

I walked over to another side room, which had been transformed into a Divine Mercy chapel. We decided to kneel and pray the chaplet of Divine Mercy. When we'd finished, we got up and prepared to leave. We took one last look around.

In these four walls, our married life began. And the chapel had stood the test of time. It had been kindly treated—carefully repaired, maintained, protected. The foundation was strong, the walls secure. Those who watched over the place obviously did so with love so that it would be around for a long, long time to come. I think that's a very good way to treat a chapel.

And, I think, a marriage.

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