

## The Vow Renewal of Leigh and Carl

### Convocation

Leigh and Carl, for you, today marks twenty-five years of marriage. Through all the years of your journey together, you have now come to this time and place to renew your vows and restate your commitment of love for each other. Knowing that no relationship is without flaw . . . knowing the kind of devotion required to make a marriage endure over time, you have chosen today to consecrate your choice to continue sharing life hand-in-hand. You are no longer just two good friends as you were before marriage -- you have become so much more. This union has forged a bond of connectedness between your two separate selves that has withstood the test of twenty-five years. Today, we gather here to celebrate your life together, your legacy and your future.

### Invocation

God of Light, who gives us the longing for love and the capability of loving, we give thanks for Leigh and Carl, for their open hearts and willing spirits, and for the example of love that they embody here in our presence. Be with them on this joyous occasion of rededicating their love and restating their vows. And be with us, their witnesses, that we may all be changed by what is given and received here today. Amen.

### Reading

To love is good; love being difficult. For one human being to love another; that is perhaps the most difficult of all our tasks, the ultimate, the last test and proof, the work for which all other work is but preparation. For this reason you cannot know love in the beginning; you have to learn it . . . Learning-time is always a long, secluded time, and so loving, for a long while ahead and far into life, is --- solitude, intensified and deepened loneliness for him who loves . . . it is a high inducement to the individual to ripen, to become something in himself, to become world, to become world for himself for another's sake, it is a great exacting claim upon him, something that chooses him out and calls him to vast things. Only in this sense, as the task of working at themselves ("to harken and to hammer day and night") might people use the love that is given them.

- Rainier Maria Rilke, from "Letters to a Young Poet"

### Address

Leigh and Carl, today is your wedding day. Again. Do you remember this day, twenty-five years ago? Just as you were then, today, you are surrounded by family and friends as you now stand here to be joined together once more in marriage. I speak on behalf of all of your loved ones as I offer this advice in the form of a prayer, a blessing, and good wishes for you both: May your marriage bring you all the exquisite excitements a marriage should bring, and may life grant you patience, tolerance, and understanding. May you always need one another --- not so much to fill your emptiness as to help you to know your fullness. A mountain needs a valley to be complete; the valley does not make the mountain less, but more; and the valley is more a valley because it has a mountain towering over it. Leigh and Carl, may you need each other, but not need from weakness. May you want one another, but not want from lack. May you encourage --- not compel --- each other. May you embrace often, remembering not to cling. May you celebrate success with one another, and may your challenges be met with grace. May you look for things to praise, often say, "I love you!" and take no notice of small faults. If you have quarrels which push you apart, may you both remember to take the first step back. May you enthusiastically enter into the mystery that is the awareness of one another's presence --- a bond that is as warm and near when you are side by side as when you are separated by time and circumstances. May you always find the truest contentment in contributing to one another's joy.

Leigh and Carl have children between them. Rachel and Caroline have grown up in the marriage that we are gathered here today to renew and celebrate. Nurturing children is truly an exercise in self-study, for it takes wisdom to learn when to hold your most precious loved ones close and how, when the time comes, to allow those same precious beings stand on their own. Any parent --- and any child --- will say that this process is not an easy one. Rachel and Caroline, the love and guidance that Carl and Leigh bestowed upon you --- as well as the lessons and the discipline --- are a lasting testament to that which keeps their marriage vibrant and rich with every passing year. You are and always will be the greatest blessings and achievements in your parents' lives. Today, they are honored that you, their daughters, stand beside them in the spirit of loving support.

### Expression of Intent

Having been reminded once again of the deep value of your own self-knowledge, and understanding that marriage is a mirror for the study of yourself, do you, Leigh, continue to choose Carl as your husband, to speak the words that will renew your commitment to him and allow you to become most fully yourself in his presence for the rest of the days of your life?

I do.

Having been reminded once again of the deep value of your own self-knowledge, and understanding that marriage is a mirror for the study of yourself, do you, Carl, continue to choose Leigh as your wife, to speak the words that will renew your commitment to her and allow you to become most fully yourself in her presence for the rest of the days of your life?

I do.

### Reading

And an astronomer said, 'Master, what of Time?' And he answered: 'You would measure time the measureless and the immeasurable. You would adjust your conduct and even direct the course of your spirit according to hours and seasons. Of time you would make a stream upon whose bank you would sit and watch its flowing. Yet the timeless in you is aware of life's timelessness, And knows that yesterday is but today's memory and tomorrow is today's dream. And that that which sings and contemplates in you is still dwelling within the bounds of that first moment which scattered the stars into space. Who among you does not feel that this power to love is boundless? Who among you does not feel that very love, though boundless, encompassed within the center of his being, and moving not from love thought to love thought nor from love deeds to other love deeds? And is not time even as love is, undivided and spaceless? But if in your thought you must measure time into seasons, let each season encircle all the other seasons, And let today embrace the past with remembrance and the future with longing.'

- Kahlil Gibran, from "The Prophet"

### Consecration

Seeing that no moment is without meaning, no undertaking is without significance, no individual is of such quality as to be diminished by even so important and enterprise as marriage, we ask that you both be honored and expanded by the promises you are about to make and the marriage that you are here to celebrate. And may love, that destiny above all destinies, be always in your midst.

### Vows

Leigh, today, I remarry you with my eyes wide open. You have helped me let go of the past, and with you, I embrace the future. I promise to bring you joy, to be at home with your spirit and to learn to love you more each day, through all the days of our lives.

Carl, today, I remarry you with my eyes wide open. You have helped me let go of the past, and with you, I embrace the future. I promise to bring you joy, to be at home with your spirit and to learn to love you more each day, through all the days of our lives.

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but Really loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get all loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real

you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

- Margery Williams, *The Velveteen Rabbit* (excerpt)

### Pronouncement

Because Leigh and Carl have renewed their pledge of love and commitment to each other before this company, I now declare that you are recommitted to each other in the covenant of marriage.

### Benediction

May both of you, now married, lovingly keep this covenant you have made. May you be a blessing and a comfort to each other, sharers of each other's joys, consolers of each other's sorrows, helpers to each other in the challenges of life. May you encourage one another in whatever you set out to achieve. May both of you, in trust and faith, live life enthusiastically and without fear. May you not only express and accept affection between yourselves, but may you always remember to reach out with love to all others. May you continue to love one another and remember, often, the inspiration of this hour.

### Kiss

You may now kiss.

### Presentation

Ladies and Gentlemen: I present to you Carl and Leigh, the newlyweds!

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