

## To Hilary, on Our Wedding Day

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James Matthew Wilson

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Here on the altar's second step  
We stand amid the gold and stone,  
The cobbled labor of unknown  
Generations their children kept

As one good sign that labor can  
Make something more than products for  
A sagging shelf, a showcase floor,  
Or to distract an idle hand.

Upon this stair the saints look down:  
Saint Thomas with full pensive face,  
And Patrick with his crook, that race,  
In still communion, gathers round

And vouches, though their names may be  
Written in no book we have read,  
This sacrament is trumpeted  
In Heaven, in continuity

With both those vows our parents took  
And each baptism and funeral  
That has transpired since Adam's fall.  
(So painted saints tell in their looks).

The past and the immortal stand  
About us, and with their assistance  
We may fill in the nervous distance  
Outlined by two crossed wedding bands.

But to this altar, to this stair,  
As beautiful as anything  
That man could build or saints' lips sing,  
You come in white with ashen hair.

You come on nervous feet with flowers,  
A present bloom grown from the past,  
To meet me on this stair at last  
And promise me your future hours.

This hour changes everything:  
In imitation of the Son,  
Within it, we two are made one  
As we exchange such words, such rings.

*James Matthew Wilson is associate professor of religion and literature at Villanova University.*