

**THE MARRIAGE OF
PRINCESS EUGENIE AND JACK BROOKSBANK**
St George's Chapel Windsor Castle
12th October 2018

It was soon after she and Jack had first met that Princess Eugenie read **The Great Gatsby** by F. Scott Fitzgerald. One particular passage in which Jay Gatsby is described reminded her immediately of Jack. She decided that she wanted eventually to let Jack know how much those words had brought him to mind. That is why they have had a special place (as the second reading) in today's wedding service.

The words that particularly reminded her of Jack concern Gatsby's smile. As we heard from the reading: "It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it..... It concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favour."

Well, a few years have passed, and Eugenie and Jack come here today to smile on *each other*, and to offer *each other* something like "eternal reassurance" and the promise of an "irresistible prejudice" in each other's favour.

In doing so, they understand that marriage is something far more profound than any kind of 'contract', as we usually understand it. There are no conditions here; no limits. They offer each other an unqualified promise to be there for each other come what may. It is the unqualified nature of the promise that generates a feeling of security; the gift of "eternal reassurance".

Of course we know that the very best of desires and intentions can be frustrated, and that marriages, even between the kindest and most careful people, can founder because of pressures unforeseen. The miracle however is that, in generation after generation, so many of us go on hoping that the keeping of the promise will be possible. It is as if we know that it is in the exchange of self-forgetful love that we human beings understand, you might say, just what we were made for.

It is with that hope in their hearts that these two people have come here today, and have made their unqualified promises "in the face of this congregation"; their families and friends and neighbours. In doing so, they have of course revealed the seriousness of their intent, but also something more. They have acknowledged their need of your support and your encouragement; they want you to believe in them. By being here today, you have given them a kind of "reassurance" for which, I know, they will be genuinely grateful.

And if they have come here "in the face of this congregation", they have come here, far more significantly, "in the sight of God". They recognise that there is much more to life than meets the outward eye alone. As Christians, they believe that that

‘mysteriously “more”’ has been revealed to us in and through the life of Jesus Christ. In him has been seen the God whose nature is love, and through him has been heard an unqualified and eternally reassuring promise to each and every one of us that, through all the vicissitudes of life, we are loved.

It is in the presence of the God of love shown to us in Jesus Christ that Eugenie and Jack have made their vows, confident that even our fragile human loving can be a merciful ingredient in a loving God’s providential operation in an often all-too-troubled world.