

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (YEAR C)

January 16, 2022

Isaiah 62:1–5 • 1 Corinthians 12:4–11 • John 2:1–11

I.

Something interesting happened to me this week.

Late Thursday afternoon,
I received an email request from a neighboring parish:

“Father, our priest here is ill.
Could you cover a Spanish-speaking wedding on Saturday?”

I was able to move some things around so that I could officiate this wedding.

I thought to myself:

“It’s fitting that,
as we hear about the wedding feast at Cana today,
when the couple had no wine,
here the couple had no priest!”

In small but analogous way,
God acted so that the wedding still took place,
so that a couple could begin their married life.

II.

There’s a stained-glass window of the wedding feast at Cana in the nave,
near the entrance to the church.

This is one of eight windows that depict the life of Christ.

These windows are not original to the church.

Interestingly, like the wedding feast at Cana,
they are celebratory,
installed on the occasion of the Cathedral’s golden jubilee in 1956.

The series of windows begins with Christ's conception—the Incarnation—and concludes with his resurrection.

To me, it seems that the *Wedding in Cana* window is in a great spot:

It marks the turn from Jesus' childhood and hidden life,
on one side of the church
to his public ministry, and to his passion, death, and resurrection,
on the other side of the church.

In that regard,
there's a beautiful paragraph in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
about the wedding feast at Cana:

“Jesus performs his first sign... during a wedding feast.
The Church attaches great importance to Jesus' presence at the wedding at Cana.
[The Church] sees in it the confirmation of the goodness of marriage
and the proclamation that thenceforth
marriage will be an efficacious sign of Christ's presence” (no. 1613).

As we hear in the conclusion to today's Gospel,

“Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs at Cana in Galilee
and so **revealed** his glory,
and his disciples began to believe in him.”

For this reason,
Cana is regarded as the third epiphany or manifestation of Christ,
following the visit of the Magi and the Baptism of the Lord.

So, today's Gospel is a kind of “echo” of the Christmas season,
which officially concluded last Sunday with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

There's something significant in that continuity.

In a sense, the epiphany of Christ is an ongoing reality:

It continues throughout the Church's liturgical calendar,
and in continues in our lives—
especially in the lives of those who are married.

This is one aspect of marriage that is under-appreciated:
the sacramental dimension of Matrimony.

Marriage between two baptized persons—
regardless of whether or not they are Catholics—
is a sacrament (*Code of Canon Law*, canon 1055 §1).

In a sense, this sacrament was “instituted” at the wedding feast of Cana.

The sacramental nature of Matrimony means that married couples are an epiphany:
living signs of Christ’s love for the Church
(see Eph 5:25–26, 31–3; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1616–1617)

People are supposed to look at married persons
and catch a glimpse of Christ’s sacrificial love.

Marriage is a noble calling—and a lot of hard work.

Marriages don’t always work out,
which the Church understands.

But because of Christ’s presence at Cana,
and his presence in the sacrament of Matrimony,
marriage remains a special sign of God’s presence and activity in the world.

III.

Today, I’d like to present a basic catechesis or instruction on marriage,
and offer gratitude and encouragement to married couples.

As a Church,
we believe that marriage is a covenant—a sacred agreement—
that establishes a partnership between one man and one woman
for two interrelated purposes:
the well-being of the couple and the procreation and education of children
(canon 1055 §1).

Only death can dissolve this union (see canon 1056).

Marriage comes about when a man and woman promise to share their lives fully
(canon 1057 §).

This is the meaning of the wedding vows;
those promises bring about the sacrament.

To be validly married,
Catholics—and only Catholics—must be married in the Church:
that is, in the presence of a Catholic priest or deacon.

The presence of a cleric underscores that marriage is never just about the couple;
it's also about the Church.

Because marriage is expression of the Church,
of Christ's love for the Church
(see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1630).

Children are the tangible expression of love between husband and wife;
their lives are meant to come about through love.

For the Church, procreation can never be purely biological;
it also something deeply sacred.

The Church asks married couples to be open to children,
and to welcome them as a gift from God.

The Church teaches that married couples should decide how many children
they can responsibly and generously bring into the world and rear.

Contraceptives do not fit with the sacred aspect of procreation,
because they separate the expressed love of spouses
from the possibility of offspring.

By contrast, natural family planning allows couples to responsibly space the birth
of their children while still expressing the purposes of marriage.

Some married couples—
perhaps more than is often realized—
long to have children and are unable to do so.

The Church understands that this can be a heavy Cross.

The Church wishes to support couples who carry that Cross,
and who often suffer in silence.

Because of human frailty and sin,
some marriages fail.

The Church wishes to support those who suffer the pain of separation and divorce.

The wedding feast at Cana is a reminder that there are obstacles in marriage,
but that God blesses this union,
and will be there to support spouses.

Christ did what was necessary for that unnamed couple in Cana.

He was invited to their wedding.

Now, he wishes to be a part of each couple's marriage,
to accompany them in good times and bad.

To reveal his power through them.

So that married couples become an epiphany to the world.