

The Second Sunday of Ordinary Time January 16, 2022

One of the most popular movie genres is the “Romantic Comedy.” They generally follow the same plot line. A man and a woman meet and it is instant chemistry. They seem perfect for each other. Then, something happens to ruin it all. It could be that the man says something unkind to the woman. Or it could be that the woman decides she’s too young to commit. Everything is thrown into chaos. Rather than sharing intimate moments, they are bickering. Finally, they decide to call it quits and end their relationship. Though they both regret breaking up, they are just too proud to patch things up. Then, something dramatic happens. For instance, the woman is getting ready to get on an airplane to leave forever and the man rushes to the airport to stop her. Or, the man is at the altar about to marry someone else, but she interrupts the ceremony to proclaim her love for him and they both leave together. There is just something about that formula that gets us every time.

There is another story that follows the plot line of a romantic comedy but with some important differences. It is the story of the Bible. Far from being a comedy, it is the drama of our salvation. God placed Adam and Eve in a perfect paradise. They enjoyed an intimate friendship. But, they decided to disobey Him and everything came crashing down around them. Their close relationship with God ended. They had to leave the Garden of Eden. What had once been a perfect, ideal harmony between them was now shattered.

The rest of the Bible is the story of God working to restore the relationship He first had with us in the Garden of Eden, the perfect romance that He intended us to have with Him but that we rejected. He never fails to reach out to His people, pleading with us to come back to our senses and return to Him. Like a young lover who goes to any length to win back his beloved, God goes to great lengths to turn our hearts back to Him.

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We are reminded of this every time we look at a crucifix. "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son." The world has never seen a greater act of love. It is the act of a God who is deeply in love with His people and willing to do anything to win us back.

Throughout the Bible, the wedding feast is the great symbol of the perfect communion God wants to have with His people. Just as a groom is in love with his bride, so God is in love with His people. The prophet Isaiah speaks to this in today's first reading: "As a young man marries a virgin, your Builder shall marry you; and as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so shall your God rejoice in you.

That brings us to today's gospel, the Wedding Feast at Cana. It is here that Jesus acts on God's desire to marry His people. Jesus as God made Man represents God the groom, and Mary and the disciples represent His people, the Church. The scene is representative of another time we see Mary and the disciples gathered together - on Pentecost when the Church is born by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is gathering the People of God, the Church, and restoring the relationship we were originally supposed to enjoy with the Father.

Traditionally, we have understood that at the Wedding Feast of Cana, Jesus raised marriage to a sacrament. What does that mean? It means that the love of a man for a woman and a woman for a man is meant to be a representation of the love of God for His People. In the Sacrament of Marriage, men and women are meant to love each other so completely that people will see in them the love of God.

For that reason, marriage is unlike any other sacrament. Every other sacrament is administered by a priest or deacon, but the Sacrament of Marriage is administered by the couple themselves. When they speak their vows to each other, they are the ministers of the sacrament. The priest and deacon are witnesses on behalf of the

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Church to the vows they make to each other. Also, every other sacrament is received by us. For instance, in Holy Communion we receive the Body and Blood of Christ. In the Sacrament of Confession, we receive absolution for our sins. But in the Sacrament of Marriage, the man and woman BECOME a sacrament. That means that the “holy part” of the marriage is not over when the couple leave the church. Rather, every moment of every day they are called to reflect God’s love to each other and to the whole world.

Now, the great miracle that Jesus performs at the Wedding Feast of Cana was changing water into wine. This miracle speaks to us of another great sacrament - the Sacrament of the Eucharist. We experience the deepest possible intimacy with Jesus precisely when we receive His Body and Blood. This was the great sacrament of love that He left for us, making it possible for us to have Jesus living within us. It is the fulfillment on earth of the deep, personal intimacy that God wants to have with us.

The truth is that Jesus longs to have this union with us in the Blessed Sacrament. That is why He went to such great lengths - dying on the cross - to make it possible.

Almost 100 years ago, Jesus appeared to a woman in Poland named Saint Faustina. In those visions, He revealed to her how much He longs for us to receive Him in Holy Communion. On one day, He told her, “When I come to a human heart in Holy Communion, my hands are full of all kinds of graces which I want to give to the soul, but souls do not even pay attention to me... They treat me as a dead object” (Diary 1385). On another day, He told her, “Oh how painful it is to me that souls so seldom unite themselves to me in Holy Communion. I wait for souls and they are indifferent to me. I love them tenderly and sincerely and they distrust me. I want to lavish my graces on them and they do not want to accept them” (Diary 1447). These words of Jesus speak to us about how He longs to be united with us in Holy Communion because of His great love for us.

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We are gathered here today much like Our Lady and the disciples were gathered with Jesus at the Wedding Feast of Cana. We will witness a miracle here - the transformation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus. Our Lord went to great lengths to make this meal possible. Let us, then, turn our hearts to Him and be reunited with Him in the love our hearts long for.