

## Lent Reflections on the Stained-Glass Windows



**Marriage**

**Monday in the Fourth Week of Lent**



MARRIAGE IS

HONOURABLE  
IN ALL

## **Reading:** John 2:1-11

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do *it*. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare *it*. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: *but* thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

## **Commentary**

A marriage is a momentous occasion. It is a time of exchanging solemn vows, prayer, feasting and joy. St John describes how Jesus shared in such an occasion at Cana and gave there a sign of abundant new beginnings as he turned water into wine. That he chose the

context of a wedding to perform his first miracle highlights the fact that Christ's mission was to bring fullness of life.

The analogy of marriage is employed right throughout scripture as a way of understanding God's relationship with His people. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Epistle to the Ephesians where St Paul says, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church (Eph. 5:31-32)." Important to note here is that the Greek word for 'mystery' is the word later employed to mean sacrament.

And, like the other sacraments, marriage follows the pattern set by the Incarnation; God lovingly responds to the world by sending his only Son to serve us and to share his life with us. For those who enter into it, marriage is a way of imitating this fundamental work of Christ. It reflects his relationship with the Church by being a covenant that involves loyalty and trust and is undertaken for the good of the whole community not just the married couple. Thus, we read in the preface to the marriage liturgy:

"The Bible teaches us that marriage is a gift of God in creation and a means of his grace, a holy mystery in which man and woman become one flesh. It is God's purpose that, as husband and wife give themselves to each other in love throughout their lives, they shall be united in that love as Christ is united with his Church.

“In marriage husband and wife belong to one another, and they begin a new life together in the community. It is a way of life that all should honour; and it must not be undertaken carelessly, lightly, or selfishly, but reverently, responsibly, and after serious thought.”

Unlike the other sacraments which are administered by a priest, the sacrament of marriage is administered by the couple. The priest does not ‘marry’ the couple but conducts the service, witnesses the vows and then blesses the couple in their married union.

The Church did not create the relationship that brought the couple to altar, nor did it create the institution of marriage which is a primordial gift of God in creation. As such, a wedding is by its very nature pregnant with theology. It provides a wonderful opportunity to witness to the God-given gifts of love, commitment and mutuality. By blessing the marriage, the priest recognises the existence of these gifts in the relationship and offers the marriage relationship to God for blessing, strengthening and binding together in His love.

Indeed, ‘offering’ is at the very centre of the sacrament of marriage. It is through the gift of marriage that couples learn the mysterious truth at work in all of the sacraments. As the wedding liturgy puts it:

“Marriage is given, that husband and wife may comfort and help each other, living faithfully together in need and in plenty, in sorrow and in joy. It is given, that with delight and tenderness they may know each other in love, and, through the joy of their bodily union, may strengthen the union of their hearts and lives.”

## Meditation

The sacrament of marriage reveals in very real terms what Christian love is all about. Very often 1 Corinthians 13 is read in which St Paul describes robust Christian loving: Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” This kind of loving is profoundly expressed in the vows the couple make at a wedding.

Read slowly through the vows from the marriage liturgy:

I, *N*, take you, *N*,  
to be my wife/husband,  
to have and to hold  
from this day forward;  
for better, for worse,  
for richer, for poorer,  
in sickness and in health,  
to love and to cherish,  
till death us do part;  
according to God’s holy law.  
In the presence of God I make this vow.

Pray for married couples known to you. Ask that God would bless their marriages and give them strength to live out the vows according to the way of Christ.

In what ways can we better imitate Christ by lovingly serving and sharing our lives with others?

## **Prayer**

Blessed are you, O Lord our God,  
for you have created joy and gladness,  
pleasure and delight, love, peace and fellowship.

Pour out the abundance of your blessing  
upon *N* and *N* in their new life together.

Let their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts  
and a crown upon their heads.

Bless them in their work and in their companionship;  
awake and asleep,  
in joy and in sorrow,  
in life and in death.

Finally, in your mercy, bring them to that banquet  
where your saints feast for ever in your heavenly home.

We ask this through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

*The Wedding Blessing*