

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today's Gospel tells the story of the wedding feast at Cana. This miracle appears only in John's Gospel. In John's Gospel, it was the first of Jesus' miracles. As I have mentioned the last two weeks, in earlier times, the Solemnity of the Epiphany also celebrated the wedding feast at Cana. Like the visit of the magi and Jesus' baptism by John, the miracle at Cana was an epiphany or manifestation. According to John, "*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.*"

In today's Gospel, Jesus came to the wedding to celebrate the love of a young man and woman for each other. Most people love weddings and wedding receptions because they are such happy times. However, weddings also remind us of an important truth about marriages.

Good marriages always operate on two levels. First, there is the every day lived relationship. Probably 95% of every good marriage is simple day-to-day living. In this day-to-day living, couples live their love for each other and for their family. Unfortunately, some people are so caught in the business of everyday living that they forget or neglect to celebrate their love, their relationship.

For marriages to grow and develop, they must also be celebrated. In other words, there need to be those times when the relationship is front and center, those times when couples are very consciously aware of each other and their relationship, very consciously aware of their love for each other. Couples celebrate their relationship, their love, in intimate conversation, at special meals, and on special occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries, holydays, and holidays. On an even deeper level, couples celebrate their relationship, their love, sexually. In at least one model of intimacy, couples celebrate their relationship, their love, most profoundly by sharing faith.

However, there is another dimension to Christian marriage. Throughout the Old Testament, the relationship between God and Israel was described as a marriage or wedding with God as the husband or groom and Israel as the wife or bride. However, as Catholic Christians, we believe that Jesus took marriage, an already good and holy institution, and elevated it to a sacrament. Therefore, we believe that the valid marriage of any two Christians is a sacrament, i.e., a sign and embodiment of Jesus' love for the Church. In other words, Christian couples who love each other are both the sign and the embodiment of Jesus' presence in our world. Once again, we have a dilemma for priests. If marriage is a sacrament of the Church, should priests witness the marriages of non-practicing or minimally-practicing Catholics?

My brothers and sisters, today's reading from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians challenges all of us. When most of us were little, our parents reminded us that God gave us our gifts and talents and, therefore, God expected us to develop and put them to good use. The implication was that God gave us these gifts for our own benefit. However, another translation of today's reading is emphatic: "*To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good*" [NAB, 1970]. In other words, all our gifts and talents are given to us not only for our benefit but to be shared with others for the common good. As Jesus himself said, "*Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more*" [Lk. 12:48].