

couple is to address the problem, and make the necessary adjustments to the problem. They are to rely upon the grace of their sacrament of marriage for the help God promised to give them in times of trouble. They are to understand that their love for each other matures when it is tested by real life challenges and difficulties. The prophet Malachi tells us that “For I hate divorce, says the Lord... So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless” (Mal 2:16).

In his love for his Church, of which you and I are members, Christ gave both his love and his life. And that is the model for all spousal love: it must be open to both spousal love and to the goodness of life. Jesus’ love for us is always open to life. So also must our spousal love be open to life.

And wine: what does wine tell us about Jesus? 120 gallons of first class wine tells us that the wedding feast was full of good fun and high spirits, conviviality. Wine means that there is something to celebrate together. Jesus wants us to be filled with good spirits. He will send us the gift of his Holy Spirit, who will distribute all this gifts, mentioned in the second reading.

Brothers and sisters, let us reflect upon the wedding feast of Cana, and its significance for us, our marriages, and our lives today.

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<http://www.nfpoutreach.org/>

**The Evangelization Station**

Hudson, Florida, USA

E-mail: [evangelization@earthlink.net](mailto:evangelization@earthlink.net)

[www.evangelizationstation.com](http://www.evangelizationstation.com)

## **JESUS GOES TO A WEDDING**

Fr. Matthew Habiger, OSB

Everyone enjoys a wedding. This is a very important moment in the lives of the bride and groom. They are making a commitment to each other, in the presence of God, that will remain with them for the rest of their lives. They don’t know what the future holds for them. They affirm their love for each other, entrust themselves to a shared destiny, open their lives to children and a family, and ask for God’s blessing upon themselves. God’s blessing and their love for each other is all they need to meet the challenges of real life ahead of them.

Marriage is a very important part of human life. God alone is the author and designer of marriage. We want to know exactly what that plan is, and then strive to the best of our ability to realize that plan in our lives. We want, also, to be an encouragement to other couples, by the example of our own lives, that God’s plan for marriage is a wonderful thing. If necessary, we must be willing to defend marriage and family from those who want to redefine, and redesign, them to suit their purposes.

Everyone at a wedding tries to cooperate. Everyone accommodates themselves to the needs of the couple. They want this to be an enjoyable occasion; an event to remember for years to come. Weddings mean good food and good drink. They usually involve dancing and a chance

to meet many people. It is a celebration of the great love which this husband and this bride have discovered between themselves.

It comes as no surprise to us that Jesus would be at weddings during his public ministry. After all, He is present at every wedding that invokes His blessing upon it. It was at the Wedding at Cana that He performed his first public miracle.

Jesus was reluctant to perform his first miracle. Why? Because He knew that once He drew upon His divine powers, then the cat was out of the bag. Then everyone would know that He was a very unusual person, that God was very close to Him and worked through Him. Only later would people come to the realization that He indeed was God, the Son of God. Once Jesus performed a public miracle, there was no turning back. His public ministry had begun. His hour had arrived, and He would be drawn inevitably to the culmination of His mission on earth: His passion, death, resurrection and ascension into Heaven, what we call the great Paschal Mystery. We can understand his reluctance to do His first miracle.

But He did it, at the instigation of his mother, who identified with the plight of the young couple. The wine had run out, and wine is part of any good wedding reception. So Jesus transforms 120 gallons of water into first class wine. Do you think that this would escape anyone's attention? If I were there, I would want to taste that wine!

Why are there miracles? The Catechism teaches that what moves us to believe is not the fact that revealed truths appear as true and intelligible in the light of our natural reason; we believe "because of the authority

of God himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived." So "that the submission of our faith might nevertheless be in accordance with reason, God willed that external proofs of his Revelation should be joined to the internal helps of the Holy Spirit." Thus the miracles of Christ and the saints, prophecies, the Church's growth and holiness, and her fruitfulness and stability 'are the most certain signs of divine Revelation, adapted to the intelligence of all'; they are "motives of credibility", which show that the assent of faith is "by no means a blind impulse of the mind." (CCC 156)

This first miracle at Cana is very important for us in the understanding of who Jesus is. John places it at the second chapter of his Gospel, and makes it the first of only seven great signs, or miracles, in his Gospel. What does marriage, spousal love, a wedding and wine tell us about Jesus?

Marriage is a central part of God's plan for us. Recall that God created us, beginning with our first parents, Adam and Eve, as bodied persons. We are either male or female, with fertility and sexuality. As God designed us, men and women are naturally drawn to each other. We want to share our lives, our very selves, with another human being. Eventually we want to make a commitment to that person, and share our entire lives with our spouse. That is the way God designed us as bodied persons.

In the Old Testament we find that God used marriage as a symbol for the relationship between God and his people. Thus, in Isaiah 62, we find that God will come to his people. His salvation will come

as a burning torch. The Lord takes his delight in Zion, the people of God. "For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you. And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you" (Is 62:5). Think about that! The relationship God wants to have with us is as intimate as that between a husband and wife. This means that God wants to be involved with us. He wants to give us His love, and He wants to receive our love. He is not a distant God; He is very close.

In the New Testament, St. Paul in Ephesians 5 talks about marriage as a great mystery. It is a great mystery because it is a symbol of, and refers to, Christ's great love for the Church, for His body, of which He is the head. Jesus so loved His bride, the Church, that He laid down his life for her. His love for her has no limits; He gives his total self for her. This is exactly what happened on Calvary. And Jesus teaches us that "greater love has no man, than to lay down his life for his beloved." That is what a husband is to do: to lay down his life for his wife and his family. It would be easy for a wife to love, and be submissive to, such a husband. Thus, we find that marriage is used in both the Old and New Testaments as a symbol of God's great love for us.

Furthermore, it is because Jesus will never forsake his bride, never give up on her, that the Church teaches us that divorce is never to be associated with God's plan for marriage. Just as Jesus is irrevocably committed to his bride, the Church, so also must husbands and wives be committed to each other. When difficulties arise, then the