

## **Second Sunday in Ordinary Time: Cana and the Call to the Married to Be Epiphanies.**

This morning we celebrate the third of the liturgical epiphanies of the Lord. In the Church the word *Epiphany*, as you know, means manifestation or showing of the Divine in the Human. Two weeks ago we celebrated the Epiphany to the Magi. Last week we celebrated the Epiphany at the Baptism of the Lord by John the Baptist. Today we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord at the Wedding Feast of Cana. This is an epiphany because the disciples and probably all at the wedding feast witnessed the power of God working through Jesus. Certainly, the word must have gone out that the host was out of wine. But after a few words from the Lord, there was plenty of wine for everyone.

We often refer to marriage preparation courses as Pre-Cana meetings. The name is an encouragement to the bride and groom to enter into a relationship where the Lord is present as He was at Cana. This elevates marriage from a civil affair to one of great dignity. It is sad that some young people are concerned about the party and not about the sacrament. Given a choice between a sacrament celebrated in the Church or a destination wedding or a beach wedding, they don't even consider what they are denying themselves when they turn away from the sacrament.

A couple who celebrates the sacrament of marriage celebrates the union of Jesus' love to their love for each other. The more they grow in love, the closer they come to the Lord. The closer they come to the Lord, the closer they come to each other.

Those celebrating the sacrament of matrimony become epiphanies for others. God can and does show His Presence in their marriage. Others sense the presence of God in their relationship.

There is a great dignity in the sacrament of matrimony. It is the dignity of people of God making His Love real for others.

We have all witnessed many wonderful examples of sacramental marriages. We all have witnessed husbands who have devoted their retired years to taking care of their wives, and wives their husbands. We have also seen so many young husband and wives who understand the hurt of their spouse suffered as a child or a teen and who care for them often at the expense of their own desires and even needs.

One of my greatest experiences as a priest was that of an elderly couple, a widow and widower who married at the end of their 70's. They knew that they would care for each other and support each other as they enjoyed their last days together. They never thought they would have to confront a horrible form of cancer. The lady came down with facial cancer. Her husband was determined that she should keep her dignity while he cared for her. No one could enter their condo, not even close neighbors. She did not want them to see her as she was, and he was determined to

fulfill her wishes. He cared for her night and day. After she passed away, I told him that he was one of the greatest husbands I had ever met. And he looked at me as if I was crazy. You know what he said to me? He said, "Well, I took vows, didn't I?" The care this couple each had for the other was an epiphany of the Lord, present in their marriage.

We have all witnessed wives whose lives consist in caring for their husbands. They cannot go and do as they might want to, because they need to be home. We have witnessed young couples who work hard to understand their spouse. They sacrifice their own desires and even needs to be present and loving for their spouse.

How different this type of marriage is then marriage as portrayed in many of our television shows or by many of those whom we call celebrities. To these, marriage consists in what an individual is going to get, not in what an individual is allowed to give. These marriages are basically selfish. This is seen when the husband or wife is no longer has his or her desires met. Then he or she seeks an end to the marriage that really never existed in the first place. At least it never existed as a Christian, sacramental marriage. The essence of a sacramental marriage is forming a life of giving, a life of true love. The essence of a sacramental marriage is the very presence of Jesus Christ.

It is a wonderful paradox in life that the more someone takes, the less he or she has and the more someone gives, the more he or she has. Those who are really married understand this. Having someone to give to is infinitely more important and infinitely more mature than having someone from whom a person can take.

The great gift of marriage is that the married are continually challenged with ways to love sacrificially. Occasions present themselves daily whether it is doing the shopping or laundry, changing the baby, getting the child to soccer or dance, working harder to provide better, taking the cars in for an oil change, or simply, getting off the couch to play with the kids. All are expressions of sacrificial love which are the routine of marriage. All are ways of living the sacrament of marriage.

Recently a lady came to the office to arrange a Mass for her parents. The lady was from the North, but her parents lived in our parish. They passed away a number of years ago. I told her that I remember her parents and that they were wonderful people. She said to me, "I was well loved." She was well loved because they loved each other well with the love of Jesus Christ. My own father passed away in 2004 and my mother in 2020. And I can also tell you, "I was well loved." I was well loved because my parents loved each other with the love of Jesus Christ.

Young men, you want to be a good father? Love your wife. Young women, you want to be a good mother? Love your husband.

Those of us who are not married need you who are married to continue to be loving husbands and wives. We need to experience the Love of the Lord in your way

of life, your sacrament of matrimony. Today we celebrate the epiphany of Christ at the Wedding Feast of Cana and the Epiphanies of the Lord in your marriages.