

Preston, Sunday 19th January 2025

2nd Sunday after Epiphany

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

Introduction: The wedding at Cana, a sign of Incarnate Love

When we celebrate a wedding, we sometimes feel that a good third of the congregation looks at the couple with a hint of disillusionment, secretly thinking: “Poor them, they have no idea what lies ahead!”

Marriage is a demanding way of life; being married means being like Christ and the Church—offered to one another.

This is why marriage is not the first-class burial of passion! Marriage is passion transformed into self-offering. I am no longer here to take or for the satisfaction of receiving, but to give and for the joy of being offered—even, in a sense, of being sacrificed.

In the Gospel of the Wedding at Cana¹, Jesus begins his public ministry by turning water into wine. This miracle, performed at a wedding, is not insignificant: it reveals not only his divinity but also the profound meaning of marriage as a sign of faithful and fruitful love between God and his people. This narrative highlights a love that is both human and divine, a love rooted in reality, in the concrete needs of a couple and a community.

1. Marriage: A Call to Incarnate Love

Christian marriage is not an abstract idea or a romantic dream, but a vocation rooted in daily reality. Pope Pius XI, in *Casti Connubii* (1930), reminds us that marriage is a divine institution aimed at the sanctification of spouses and the transmission of life. He writes:

“True conjugal love requires that a man be profoundly and totally devoted to his wife, that he serve her true good.”

To love is not to gaze into each other’s eyes with longing sighs.

In an age where love is often reduced to fleeting emotion or selfish desire, Christian marriage reminds us that love is an act of self-giving. It is not about losing oneself in dreams or virtual illusions but about giving oneself, body and soul, to the other.

2. The Danger of Disembodied Love: Pornography and Virtuality

Saint John Paul II emphasizes the dignity of human love, which involves respecting the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. He warns against the forms of disembodied love that proliferate in modern culture, particularly through pornography and virtual relationships that reduce others to objects of consumption.

“Freedom without truth leads to the destruction of love².”

¹ Jn., 2, 1-11.

² John-Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, 1981.

Pornography, like purely virtual relationships, alienates humans from the truth of love, which is always personal, incarnate, and open to the other. It destroys our connection to reality by trapping individuals in sterile fantasy.

Today, modern humans count their friendships by “friends” or “followers” on social networks... How vain, hollow, and useless this is.

True relationships are concrete and demanding; the other forces me to step out of myself and my comfort zone. A click on a computer is far less effort than giving a thoughtful gift to a friend.

3. Jesus, Mary, and the New Wine: Grace in Reality

At the Wedding at Cana, Jesus acts in a concrete setting: a wedding feast where the wine, a symbol of joy and abundance, is running out. By addressing the immediate needs of the couple, he shows that authentic love does not shy away from human realities but elevates them through grace. Similarly, Mary, through her intercession, teaches us to be attentive to the concrete needs of others.

Christian marriage is a place where God’s grace manifests in simple gestures: a smile, forgiveness, a service rendered. Love is not a disembodied idea but a commitment that transforms daily life.

Dear couples, by the end of the month, consider the “sofa and prayer corner” operation! A space to sit together and a space to pray together. Without children—just the two of you. Do not be afraid to have a soul.

4. A Call to Couples: Living a Love Rooted in Reality

In conclusion, love in marriage is not an idealistic dream but a vocation to live in reality, with its joys and challenges. Saint John Paul II invites us to rediscover the beauty of marriage as a path to holiness:

"Man becomes the image of God not only through his humanity but through the communion of persons."

To the couples present, I encourage you: do not seek perfect love in illusions but build authentic love by giving yourselves to one another, daily, in the truth of your bodies, hearts, and souls.

Conclusion: Incarnate Love, a Sign for the World

Christian marriage, like the Wedding at Cana, is a sign for today’s world. In a world often tempted by the virtual and the disembodied, it proclaims that true love is lived in reality, in self-giving and sacrifice. Let us root our lives in this truth: love is not dreamed; it is given, it is incarnate, it becomes new wine for the salvation of the world.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.