

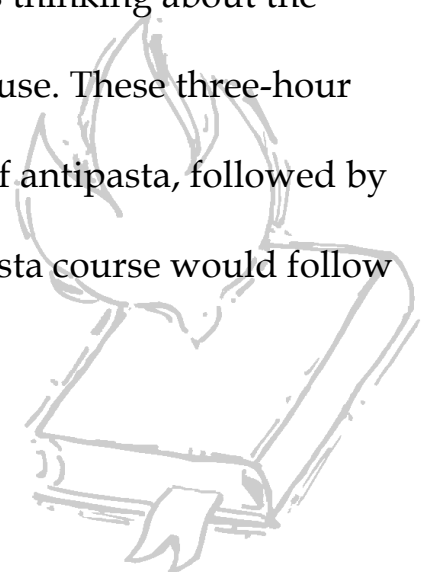
**Homily**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday OT C**  
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski  
January 19-20, 2019

Is 62: 1-5  
Ps 96: 1-2, 2-3, 7-8, 9-10  
1 Cor 12: 4-11  
Jn 2: 1-11

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Whenever we cross past the Wedding of Cana gospel from the Gospel of John every three years, I can't help but take myself back to 1998 when I visited the birthplace of my mother in her place of birth, Cosenza, Italy. Cosenza is a rural city in the state of Calabria, which, if Italy looks like a boot, Calabria would be her big toe kicking the country of Sicily. For a week or so, a friend of mine and I visited my Uncle (Zio) Franco and my Aunt (Zia) Cesira with their two children, walking through garden pastures and up neighboring hills to fill jars with fresh waters from the streams.

Especially in relation to today's gospel, I was thinking about the lunches we used to share at my Zio Franco's house. These three-hour extravaganzas usually started with some type of antipasta, followed by the pasta of the day, always homemade. The pasta course would follow



some type of meat or fish, which was followed by some type of ice cream (or gelato) to clean the palate. In Italy, the salad follows the main course and then the pastries and then the cookies. (Each part of the meal would be served in half an hour intervals so that the body would be allowed to digest and rest between courses.) Following the dinner, the men used to retreat to their beds for an afternoon nap while the ladies would clean up the kitchen and sit outside, sipping lemon liqueur (Limoncello) while talking about the men.

During the entire meal, my Zio Franco would constantly walk up and down the stairs of his farmhouse, filling bottles with the homemade wine (barriles del vino de la casa) that the family made each year from the grapes of the harvest, wine that probably was the best tasting and most intimate for me of all the wines I have drunk (and I don't usually drink!). As with most of the Italian wines from my family, their consistency is usually that of grape juice "with a kick"; you would drink what tasted like grape juice, overindulge because you thought that you were drinking grape juice rather than wine but after ten minutes ...

BAM! ... the wine would get you and you wouldn't be able to walk for the rest of the day.

Now I can sit here and read the Catechism for all of you, telling you about the charisms of marriage, that a faithful marriage is seen as indissoluble, unitive and procreative (indisoluble, unitivo y procreador). I can tell you that, according to God's law and according to nature, when man and woman unite in marriage they make a commitment to do so for the rest of their lives in good times and in bad. They are unitive – they are one. They are indissoluble – they make a commitment never to be separated. They are procreative – they commit themselves to bringing children in the world. I can tell you that paragraphs 2380-2400 cite the abuses that take place in Christian marriage, in all its varying forms. I can tell you that the words of consent and the rings placed on the fingers of the husband and wife serve as visible signs of the invisible grace that comes forth from this sacramental institution.

I can tell you that many in today's society object to both God's laws of marriage and the Natural Law that God established and that the shift in public opinion polls attempt to undo the parameters that God has set for

us. We also have learned in our history what happens when we veer from God's plan and how difficult it becomes to right the Church when its tenets have been compromised.

I can teach you about the symbolism of marriage and the manner in which this symbolism has been both embraced and abused. I can also just open a bottle of wine and show you the image of a good marriage with the telling of this story of my Italian family.

Why would this particular gospel tell of this particular miracle that we will not find in any other of the gospel readings? Moreover, if the gospel of John only describes *seven* miracles in total that our Lord carries out<sup>1</sup>, why would this miracle seemingly of not such great importance be included in the list of seven? The answer, as offered to us by some scripture scholars, might have a great deal to do with the image of Christian marriage itself and the manner in which our Lord will choose to define it.

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<sup>1</sup> The seven miracles are listed as the changing of water into wine (2: 1-11), the Healing of the Official's Son (4: 43-54), the Healing at the Pool of Bethesda (5: 1-9), the Feeding of the 5,000 (6: 1-5), the Walking on the Water (6: 16-25), the Healing of the Man born Blind (9: 1-41) and the Raising Lazarus from the Dead (11: 1-44).

Scholars will tell us that this institution of marriage, established by God and by Natural Law, was seen in the Old Testament as the union that would continue to provide a covenantal relationship between the divine and a Chosen People. As seen in the Old Testament, the relationship allowed God to show his favor upon successive generations and establish a relationship between heaven and earth.

In today's gospel reading, our Lord elevates the status of marriage to that not just of man and woman but of God and God's creation, namely humanity as a whole. This gift of water turned wine becomes a precursor to the marriage symbolism presented at the end of the gospel when blood and water flow from the side of our Lord at his crucifixion, the symbol of Christian marriage that exists between God and us. From *that* symbol on the cross of that blood and water, we are taught that Christ married the Church and the symbolism of the Church is established through that outpouring. (see Catechism #1225). As paragraph #1621 of the Catechism shares with us...

In the Latin Rite the celebration of marriage between two Catholic faithful normally takes place during Holy Mass, because of the

connection of all the sacraments with the Paschal mystery of Christ. In the Eucharist the memorial of the New Covenant is realized, the New Covenant in which Christ has united himself for ever to the Church, his beloved bride for whom he gave himself up. It is therefore fitting that the spouses should seal their consent to give themselves to each other through the offering of their own lives by uniting it to the offering of Christ for his Church made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice, and by receiving the Eucharist so that, communicating in the same Body and the same Blood of Christ, they may form but “one body” in Christ.

En el rito latino, la celebración del matrimonio entre dos fieles católicos tiene lugar ordinariamente dentro de la Santa Misa, en virtud del vínculo que tienen todos los sacramentos con el Misterio Pascual de Cristo. En la Eucaristía se realiza el memorial de la Nueva Alianza, en la que Cristo se unió para siempre a la Iglesia, su esposa amada por la que se entregó. Es, pues, conveniente que los esposos sellen su consentimiento en darse el uno al otro mediante la ofrenda de sus propias vidas, uniéndose a la ofrenda de Cristo por su Iglesia, hecha presente en el Sacrificio Eucarístico, y recibiendo la Eucaristía, para que, comulgando en el mismo Cuerpo y en la misma Sangre de Cristo, “formen un solo cuerpo” en Cristo.

And so in this Second Sunday of Ordinary Time, we remind ourselves of the covenant made by man and woman at this sacrament, that it serves as a reminder of greater, final and eternal covenant that starts at this altar and continually is fulfilled upon this cross, which is placed in close proximity to the altar so that we truly understand what this type of eternal sacrifice means to a faithful Catholic.

In my reflection of today's reading, I certainly wish to remember my Cosenza relatives in Italy. Last Spring, I had the opportunity to visit my Italian relatives in Naples with wonderful food and wine shared between us. I was able to spend time with Pino and Bea, whose marriage I celebrated some twenty years prior. Pino took me to the cemetery where his father recently was buried, and I had the opportunity to spend time with the most wonderful soul of his mother Cesira, who hosted this lunch, surrounded by her family. If we embrace the gift of family and what it represents in a Christian context, then we understand why we are mandated by love to preserve and support the Christian family, the domestic Church, as modeled by this simple, Christ-filled family who make the best wine I ever have tasted (not because of the taste per se, but because of the hands and hearts who made that wine possible).

May we model this sacrifice in the Christian marriages that our Church is blessed to support and embrace. May we all recommit ourselves to the covenant we make with God and the miracle of God's presence that is part of the lives we live. And the next time we lift up

that glass of wine, no matter from where it comes or how it is made,  
may we remind ourselves of the source that makes this wine possible,  
the same source that gave us life and desires deeply to have us return  
back to it on the last day. Let us share these blessings with the people  
that we meet. This is our prayer.