



Sacraments 18/35: Introduction to the Sacrament of Matrimony

The Sacrament of Matrimony is a grace-filled gift from God that recognizes and elevates the natural love that attracts and unites a man and a woman. From the beginning of Scripture and of time, one man and one woman have been drawn to each other and made a new home, a new family, and a new way of life by joining together. We see this in Genesis, with the bond between Adam and Eve (2:18-24), a bond seen as permanent and unbreakable by Jesus in Matthew 19:4-6. Jesus' first miracle in the Gospel of John is where He is attending a wedding in Cana and turns water into wine (2:1-11). As the wine foreshadows His own gift of His Precious Blood, the meaning continues of its life-giving and joy-filled purpose. Weddings are times of celebration and joy, and God loves to be a part of them.

Again, as in all of sacramental theology, the grace of the Sacrament builds on the natural meaning of the ritual action. It does not replace this natural meaning: it makes it supernatural. The natural meaning of the Sacrament of Matrimony begins with the natural yearning of a man and a woman for each other. Humanity flourishes within a loving and committed family. While monogamy can be a burden at times, it is the most loving thing for a family to stay faithful to each other within a relationship of absolute trust. Because this relationship can be at times trying and difficult, God has blessed these unions with the grace of a Sacrament. The supernatural meaning of Matrimony is that this Sacramental Union is now an image of Christ's Love for His Church. The joy a couple finds in each other, the love they share and model for us, are all an icon pointing to the intense love that God has for each one of us. The Song of Songs in the Bible is an entire allegory of the love of a man and a woman for the love God has for humanity. It is neither a distant nor a tame love. God is on fire with love for us.

All of Scripture is closed out with the image of a Wedding. The Book of Revelation ends with the "Wedding Feast of the Lamb," where Christ eternally unites Himself to His Church (19:6-9). The Eucharist is a foretaste of this Wedding Feast, and Matrimony is the living image constantly before us of the love present at this Feast.

-Fr. Kopp

Next Week: Essentials of the Rite of Matrimony