

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
(Isaiah 62:1-5 / John 2:1-11)
16.01.2022
Nuptial Love

Dear brothers and sisters,

The relationship of God with his people is something real but difficult to put into words. To describe this relationship, the Bible has recourse to different images. One of them is the image of a marriage. The relationship of God with his people is described as similar to the relationship of a bridegroom with his bride. God is the bridegroom, the people his bride.

In today's first reading, the prophet Isaiah, speaking of Jerusalem and its inhabitants, thinking of Jerusalem's glory and triumph to come, tells us:

“Like a young man marries a virgin,
so will the one who built you wed you, (in other words: your Creator will marry you),
and as the bridegroom rejoices in his bride,
so will your God rejoice in you”.

It is clear that Isaiah understands the relationship between God and the inhabitants of Jerusalem in terms of a nuptial relationship.

The New Testament teaches us that the Church is the New Jerusalem. So, it is not surprising that we have in today's gospel passage the same message as we find in Isaiah. The episode of the marriage at Cana is not a narrative concerning just one particular wedding among many others. The proof is that we don't even know the names of the bride and the bridegroom at this wedding! The wedding at Cana at which the water was changed into wine is the first sign of Jesus' ministry. It consisted in revealing the Father's bountiful love for humankind. The Father's love is revealed as a nuptial love. Here we have the profound meaning of the wedding feast at Cana. The nuptial love of God for his chosen people revealed by Isaiah's prophecy was just a foretaste, a sort of preparation for the plenitude of God's love for his people revealed in Jesus.

All that is spelt out clearly in our gospel passage. The first covenant is represented by the six stone water jars standing there. These water jars were used by the Jews for the ablutions which were prescribed as a preparation for the religious feasts. These jars numbered six, one short of seven, the number of fullness or perfection. The new covenant is made manifest when Jesus changes the water into wine as an indication that what had been announced as a foretaste by Isaiah is now fully realized.

God sent his Son Jesus into the world to espouse our humanity so that we may share in his divinity. There is a nuptial dimension to God's love for us and our love for Him.

Let us reflect upon that nuptial dimension.

The love between the bride and the bridegroom does not happen and mature in the twinkling of an eye or with a snap of the finger. It takes time. The bride and the bridegroom have to give time to one another in order to offer love to one another and to receive this gift from each other. I see

this as alluding to time dedicated to prayer in which we receive God's love for us and offer our love to him: Giving time to sing psalms and offer praise; taking time to listen to God's word through which God communicates his love to us, offering time to intercede for the needs of others, time for silence in which we enjoy being with the Lord in a mutuality of presence: All that is so important! It says: 'Lord, you are here for me and I am here for you!'

Our nuptial relationship with the Lord does not consist only in prayer, in taking time to be with the Lord. This is an important and necessary step, but it is not enough. To love the Lord we also have to do the will of the Lord whom we love. At Cana, Mary said to the servants: "Do whatever he tells you". Searching for the Lord, seeking to know his will, fulfilling his desire, this is to love the Lord with our whole being. Listening to the Lord through his word, through our brothers and sisters in humanity, through the Church, and even through nature, these are the ways by which we give flesh to our love for the Lord in answer to the Lord's love for us.

To do whatever the one we love tells us to do can sometimes be easy, but not always, for it remains that we are different and so to do whatever the other tells us to do can also be difficult. At times it can be painful and even crucifying. It happens that God asks us to do what we don't want to do, what we don't like doing, what we may be afraid to do. Jesus came to do the Father's will and not his own. To love God means that we choose freely and consent wholeheartedly to do the Lord's will and not just our own.

At the heart of our life of faith, there is the presence of a living person who loves us and whom we should love: the Lord Jesus. Our hearts and minds should be focussed on Him, but, so often, we are "all over the place", more preoccupied with ourselves and by our multiple petty projects than we are with the Lord.

Lord, grant us the grace to welcome your love for us. Lord, grant us the grace to love you, to love you night and day, and to find our happiness in living in your presence, loving, serving and respecting you in our neighbours.