

Sign of the Eternal Nuptials Holy Land Pilgrimage Franciscan Church of the Miracle, Cana Wednesday, October 29, 2014 Gn 2:18-25; **Jn 2:1-11** (In every marriage there must be self-sacrifice, there must be self-donation. We have to be very merciful about those who don't quite make it. This is an ongoing issue, a living issue, in the lives of the faithful people.)

“Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs here in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.”

So Tony asked a very good question: “What’s the difference between a miracle and a sign?” Of course it depends who you ask. The word “sign” is the preferred word in the Fourth Gospel, the Gospel of John, as opposed to “miracle.” The very word “miracle” means something provoking marvel or wonder, whereas a sign does not provoke wonder or marvel. **A sign** is something significant. It points to something else. It’s not something of itself but, rather, **points to the meaning of something beyond it.** And so for John, the evangelist, the beloved disciple of Jesus or his author, the whole idea of the signs Jesus works are really all pointing to something else. They are not merely acts of wonder. They are not really something that provoke marvel. They are not merely forms of divine creative power. They are that, but they are more. And so **with John we are supposed to be seeking deeper meaning.**

Now Tony alluded to references to the Old Testament and to the whole experience of the Exodus, the liberation from Egypt. That’s valid, but it’s not the whole story either. In the opening prayer there is a reference to the **eternal nuptials.** That’s also part of this story, that the wedding is not something that happened here two thousand years ago, but rather it’s the very meaning of Jesus’ coming to earth. **It is the wedding of heaven and earth. It is the marriage of the divine with the human.** That’s the eternal nuptials. And toward this end **Jesus is willing to pour out his blood.** His blood is life-giving because it brings reconciliation. It is a sign of love, the love of God that will stop at nothing to bring healing and peace and reconciliation among God’s own people, that is, the human race that he loves, that he created to be with him, and yet that has been so wayward in its entire history, so unwilling to get along and to live in peace and to cooperate with God in building the kingdom of God. And Jesus comes as it were in the eleventh hour to prevent the self-destruction of this wonderful creation that is so bent on its self-will, that is so oblivious to the wonders that lie within it, its wonderful potential for godliness, for divinity itself. So in order to reclaim that great potential, in order to allow that potential to blossom, **Jesus is willing actually to give himself up in total trust of the Father in an act of supreme love.** “No greater love has anyone than that he lay down his life.” So Jesus is willing to be that one who lays down his life out of love **to bring reconciliation to the warring factions of earth.** And this is of course now **the price of the eternal nuptials.**

Now this is the first sign, and Scripture says very clearly that “My time has not yet come.” Jesus’ time comes during the passion. That’s the coming of his time **when he actually dies.** **But this is a sign of that because the water is just formed into wine, but the wine is the presence of Christ himself.** At the Last Supper he said, “Take and drink” for this wine—he didn’t say the word wine—but “this is my blood.” So the wine of the Passover becomes the

blood of the passion which is the sign of the love of God poured out to bring reconciliation, peace, and forgiveness to all—the price of the divine nuptials. So what we celebrate here is first and foremost—I am interpreting John’s mind—first and foremost it’s the nuptials of heaven and earth.

And in that is the meaning of the sacrament of Matrimony because **in every marriage there must be self-sacrifice, there must be self-donation, there must be a placing of the other first for that marriage to be truly a sacrament of Christ, a sign of Christ’s love for his Church.** We use those words, Ephesians uses those words, but do we understand what they mean? That a true marriage, a true sacramental marriage, is one that is powered by this self-sacrificing love which Jesus himself embodied. And that kind of a marriage is indissoluble because it is created by God himself.

Now most people are, I would say, perhaps desirous of that, but not always able to deliver the gift that it signifies. So we depend on the grace of God. This is something Pope Francis would talk about, how we have to **be very merciful about those who don’t quite make it.** We have to understand that what is really required is nothing less than the blood of Jesus poured out on the cross. And people who fail to have that sort of self-donation, nonetheless, can receive the mercy that very gift gives and applies. **So we have to try to incorporate both the ideal of the cross and the mercy of the cross within the way we act as Church.** This is not an easy thing and this is what Pope Francis is trying to tell us. How we will work it out is yet to be determined. **This is an ongoing issue, a living issue, in the lives of the faithful people.**

So we will now continue with the renewal of marriage promises for those who want to.