



2016 Annual Marriage Day Mass Homily

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St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
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The power to change water into wine became one of the great signs Jesus gave to substantiate his claims, that he is the Son of God and that the kingdom of God had begun to be felt in the world. This power of the Risen Lord has been made available to his people, and we feel that grace whenever what seems ordinary or mundane about our lives is transformed.

The new thing that comes about has been transformed by love and the ordinary has become extraordinary because our motivation has changed. We see this so often in the lives of married couples. The ordinary actions, done with love, bring great joy and harmony to husband and wife. They taste the wine of the kingdom.

The importance of the marriage of man and woman in our society can never be overstated. Each of us has gathered in this cathedral to honour those couples, who have reached very significant milestones in their marriages. It is an opportunity for us to recognise the great debt we owe to our parents and our families of origin where we learned about marriage and family life.

We have learned so much from parents as they were learning how to be loving partners. We learnt from their successes and their failures. We, perhaps, came to admire their courage as they persevered when they were disappointed, or had to face the reality of their frailty and accept that there was so much more growing required on one another's part.

We learned from their sharing of times of joy, when they really felt that oneness of heart and mind.

I remember with great fondness those nights as a youngster lying in bed and hearing the faint sound of my parents' chatting together and their laughter, as their busy day ended and they were preparing for bed. It seemed to me such a positive way to end the day. They did not always agree on things but they would work at it because of their love for each other. I remember feeling reassured and safe because I knew the love of my mother and father would be there, too, for my sister and I when we woke the next day.

Marriage of man and woman has always been a part of human history and revered in all cultures. The commonly acknowledged value of marriage is that it provides for the well-being of the couple and the family they may be blessed to generate. Our human and Christian societies really need our marriages and family life to be healthy.

Christians understand that marriage is not just a human institution. We have discerned, with the help of the Sacred Scripture, that part of its mystery is that it naturally flows from the very nature



of man and woman, and, as man and woman are the creation of God, we can say that marriage has been always in the mind of the Creator and is, in fact, his creation.

We have come to realise that God acts with love when he creates. The pinnacle of creation is the human person, to whom God gives the capacity to love others, even to the extent of forgetting oneself. In fact, the love of wife and husband, in a true marriage, has become an icon of the love of God Himself for humanity.

We believe that man and woman were made for each other, physically, psychologically and spiritually. Their differences make for strong partnerships. They complement one another; each brings positive strengths to their relationship that will help each person grow in many ways.

How often have I heard couples say that they have reached a point in their marriage where they just know what the other is thinking or going to say - they have come to know each other so well? Or that one partner sees how much they have changed because they have learnt to communicate better, for example, from observing their partner's ways of communicating.

St Paul could have easily been thinking of a married couple when he wrote to the Colossians, 'Be clothed in sincere compassion.....kindness.....humility.....gentleness.....patience. Bear with one another.....forgive one another as soon as a quarrel begins.....Forgive, do as the Lord has done for you. Teach each other.....advise each other, in all wisdom.....With gratitude... sing to God. Never say or do anything except in the name of Jesus.'

We have with us this morning couples who want to celebrate in gratitude the faithfulness of God that has enabled them to reach this point in their journey together. They can thank God for his plan of married life for them, notwithstanding the times of disappointment and sorrow which have been woven together with the times of discovering new and wonderful things, of being comfortable and relaxed with each other, with the times of challenge to change and letting go of the negative things of the past into a wonderful tapestry of life.

You are an encouragement to us all. You help us believe in the beauty of the love of man and woman, and the beauty of the plan of God that brings fulfilment to our hopes and dreams.