

Homily for January 15-16th 2022
2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

The Wedding Attire

Weddings are events where what we wear really matters. Each November Calgary hosts a wedding expo at the Convention Centre. Brides will attend to view the fashionable choices to consider for their nuptial gala. As a priest, I am privileged to preside at many weddings. Everyone there, especially the bridal and groom's party have given a great deal of thought to how they are dressed.

So today I would like to think about the Gospel reading by giving attention to the wedding attire of those guests who are at the heart of the story. I am going to concentrate with you on three participants at the wedding, Mary, Jesus and us; who today I am inviting to the wedding as guests. So let's enter into the scene knowing that because this is a Jewish wedding we are going to be celebrating for a week – the length of a Jewish wedding celebration.

As we take our seats we are caught up in the joyful celebration.... There is much laughter, Middle Eastern food and music with the rich tonality of Hebrew modal melodies. We spy Mary, who is so pleased that Jesus and the disciples are also present. As the festivities continue to swell with gaiety and delight, we are thoroughly enjoying ourselves. Dancing and the warmth of the Canaan evening make us thirsty. Returning to our seat, we notice there is no more wine..... But we look to Mary and notice something beautiful. She is earnestly talking with Jesus and we are impressed by the colourful mantle she is wearing. It is a rich blue, and brings out her olive coloured skin and dark hair. We are able to draw closer to their conversation that mother and son are sharing as we hear our Lady say to Jesus: "They have no more wine". No more wine.... Oh no, there are days left for the celebration and late into the first night, the wine is already gone. Here we discover the following about Mary. Her mantle expresses by its rich blue hues, something lovelier still. The way she intercedes on behalf of this couple, whom she loves, to her son. She isn't at all demanding, but with gentle care she makes known their need. Before we know it, she is then speaking to the steward of the feast instructing him to "do whatever Jesus tells him". This speaks to us of something that is particular to St. John's Gospel, the Mother of Jesus is the mother of the wedding couple too. She spoke to Jesus on their behalf and now she speaks to the one representing the couple, the steward, on behalf of Jesus. The only other time we meet Mary in John's Gospel is at the foot of the Cross where Jesus says to Mary, "Woman behold your son", and to St John, "Son behold your mother". Throughout the history of our Catholic Tradition, Mary's Mantle has been representative of her maternal care.... Indeed centuries later St Juan Diego in 1531 would unfurl his tilma in front of the Bishop of Mexico and on it would be represented our Lady and her mantle.

Next we turn our gaze to the Lord, and what strikes us is not so much what he is wearing, for he is dressed in the attire of a first century Jewish male, but it is what we come to realize during the weeklong celebration. We witnessed the miracle of the water turned into wine, oh and wasn't that the best wine ever enjoyed. As we are examining our goblet and the burgundy liquid we ponder the significance of the very first miracle Jesus enacted. As we think about the words we

overheard him say to Mary, when she had made the request on behalf of the couple: “Woman, what concern is that to you and me? My hour has not yet come” we ask: What hour is Jesus talking about? Well we know that within Jewish teaching there was a belief that when the Messiah came he would inaugurate and celebrate the wedding between God and Israel. The Prophet Isaiah was the poet who wrote about this theme more than any other prophet. Towards the end of his 66 chapter prophecy we recall these words from chapter 62 – words proclaimed at today’s Mass:

***You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.
4 You shall no more be termed Forsaken,
and your land shall no more be termed Desolate;***

As we think about these words, we draw a connection with the wedding couple. They would have felt forsaken if the wine had run out on day one of their nuptials. There would have been a pall of desolation and embarrassment that would have deflated the celebration. But this didn’t happen because Jesus turned water into 720 litre bottles of the best wine ever. So this is what we discover. The figurative attire Jesus is wearing is that of the bridegroom. And while in English the way the words are stated is definitively as “my hour has not yet come” the construction of the sentence could also read: “Has not my hour already come?” Understood in this way, Jesus would be announcing that the hour to inaugurate his saving work is now, and its completion will be at the cross when Jesus again addresses his mother as “Woman.”¹

Now we discover something about ourselves as we think of the implications of all we are witnessing. We are not just there as guests but in fact if Jesus is the bridegroom, and Mary is our Mother than each one of us is actually the bride of Christ. How do we know this? Well because of what Isaiah says next in his prophecy,

***but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her,
and your land Married;
for the LORD delights in you,
and your land shall be married.
5 For as a young man marries a young woman,
so shall your builder marry you,
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
so shall your God rejoice over you. 2***

¹ Martin, F., & Wright, W. M., IV. (2015). [The Gospel of John](#) (P. S. Williamson & M. Healy, Eds.; p. 58). Baker Academic.

² [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#) (Is 62:4–5). (1989). Thomas Nelson Publishers.

In our psalm for today we heard these words: “Worship the Lord in Holy Splendor” The Revised Standard Version puts it this way: “Worship the LORD in holy attire”³ We now see Jesus is indeed the Messianic bridegroom and the wedding he inaugurated in John 2 will find its fulfillment in heaven for as St John declares in Revelation 19 we see described our holy attire.

*Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready;
8 to her it has been granted to be clothed
with fine linen, bright and pure”—
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*⁴

We are dressed in the fine linen of those who are loved by our bridegroom Jesus, described as our righteous deeds. We are not to be those who upon leaving the wedding just go back to life the way it was. Nor is this a wedding banquet that is to last for just one week. We are to realize that whenever we come to Mass we are sharing in a most special way in the marriage supper of the Lamb. For as St Augustine wrote more than 1600 years ago:

*Every celebration [of the Eucharist] is a celebration of Marriage; the Church’s nuptials are celebrated. The King’s Son is about to marry a wife, and the King’s Son [is] himself a King; and the guests frequenting the marriage are themselves the Bride.*⁵

I pray that this meditative homily will help us all to discover more the delight of what it means to be married to Jesus and we will worship the Lord in Holy Attire for we are a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord and a royal diadem in the hand of our God.

³ [The Holy Bible](#) (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Ps 96:9). (2006). Ignatius Press.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#) (Re 19:7–8). (1989). Thomas Nelson Publishers.

⁵ Augustine, Homilies on 1 John 2:12-17