



**2<sup>nd</sup> Week of Ordinary Time (Year C) 19 January 2025**

**Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh**

**“Tell among the nations his glory” (Psalm 96)**

I was very happy a while ago to return to Holy Souls, Acocks Green, Birmingham, to celebrate a Mass of thanksgiving for a couple whose wedding I had conducted 50 years ago. It was lovely to see them again after all the years and to be able to impart this Blessing:

Lord God and Creator,  
We bless and praise your name,  
In the beginning you made man and woman,  
So that they might enter a communion of life and love.  
You likewise blessed the union of N. with N.,  
So that they might reflect the union of Christ  
with his Church:  
look with kindness on them today,  
you have preserved the union between them;  
renew their marriage covenant,  
increase your love in them,  
and strengthen their bond of peace,  
so that (surrounded by their children)  
they may always rejoice in the gift of your blessing.

We ask this through Christ our Lord

**R. Amen.**

As well as celebrating their Wedding Anniversary with a meal with family and friends, here they were able to give thanks to God for their years together. Happily more couples have the opportunity to celebrate significant anniversaries in this way in their parishes, and in recent years it has been taken up at Diocesan level too with a special Mass at St Chad’s Cathedral. I expect this occasion will be marked in a special way this Jubilee Year. It is significant then that the first miracle of Jesus after his Baptism was at the Wedding in Cana, Galilee; the account of it is recorded in St John’s Gospel which is read on the second Sunday of Ordinary Time. The Loyola Sunday Connection Commentary says: *“In the Church’s liturgical history, the wedding feast of Cana is closely associated with the baptism of the Lord and the adoration of the Infant Jesus by the Wise Men. In this context,*

**Monsignor Daniel McHugh**

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese

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*the sign Jesus performs at the wedding feast is celebrated as an epiphany or a manifestation of Jesus' divinity.*" More than this, it seems to me that in choosing to perform his first miracle at the Wedding in Cana, Jesus is pointing to the wonder of marriage in God's plan for us. The Prayer of Blessing I used at the 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary speaks of marriage as a "Covenant": it is "*a communion of life between one man and one woman through which they become husband and wife, mutually share their complete selves, promote each other's fullest welfare, and in love beget and raise children*" writes Gerard O'Collins and Edward Farrugia in their Dictionary of Theology. They go on to point out that Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to a 'Wedding Feast' (Gospel of St Matthew 22: 1-14 and 25: 1-13) and His love for the Church is compared to the marriage bond in the Letter to the Ephesians (5:22-23).

When celebrating marriage with a couple I share with them the Scripture Readings recommended by the Church for the Ceremony. Many choose readings about "love" and in particular the Gospel of St John Chapter 15:12 where Jesus says: "*This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you.*" I advise them in the Homily to have a Crucifix in their home, where they can pray before this image of Jesus who gave all in love for us.

Thinking of marriage in the context of the Jubilee Year 2025 it is worthwhile noting that Pope Francis in his first Saturday Jubilee Audience on 11 January (as well as his traditional Wednesday Audience, the Pope is holding a Saturday Audience in the Jubilee Year) speaks of the Jubilee inviting us "to begin again." This beginning again impacts on all of us whatever our state of life. In marriage we have an opportunity to reflect on living out this vocation and renewing our commitment to live like Jesus on the Cross, while asking the forgiveness of the Church in the Sacrament of Confession for past failures. In the Gospel of the Second Sunday we take heart from the presence of Jesus who worked his first miracle for a couple in difficulty. We also note that it was at the intervention of Mary that Jesus turned water into wine: Ferlita in his commentary speaks of it as "*a gift from the heart of Mary in time.*"

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