

## 21 B

*A young man knocked at the door of a house. 'Who is it?' said a voice from inside. 'It's me,' said the young man. 'I've come to ask permission to marry your daughter'. 'You're not ready,' said the voice from within, 'Go away and come back in a year.' A year went by. The young man come back and knocked on the door again. 'Who is it?' said the voice from inside. 'It's us,' said the young man. 'We've come to ask your permission to marry.' The voice from within said, 'You're **now** ready. Please come in.'*

The journey from 'me' to 'us' can be quite painful for many people, especially if you're used to doing your own thing. The church describes marriage as a partnership of life and love which only death can dissolve. Your oneness as a couple will of course be tested in the twists and turns of life. But with God in your lives, no difficulty will be too great to overcome. The marriage feast at Cana is ample proof of this. Without Jesus on hand to turn the water into wine things would have gone horribly wrong. Here Jesus, at Mary's prompting, is instrumental into turning apparent failure into an outstanding success. It's application for marriage is plain for those 'with eyes to see'.

Someone once said that 'a man is incomplete until he's marriage' and someone light-heartedly added – 'and then he's completely finished'. The catholic catechism teaches that one of the consequences of Adam and Eve's fall from grace is a rupturing of the original harmony between the man, the woman and their Creator which is passed on to the rest of us through propagation. We refer to this rupture as Original Sin.

That rupture seems more evident today as God is being relegated to the sidelines. The more we leave God out of our married life, and indeed all our relationships, the more vulnerable we become. The rise of the divorce rate is ample evidence of this. Needless to say, this has painful consequences, particularly for children. We all know that

'broken homes' fuel childhood troubles. But Christ came to redeem marriage and heal our wounded nature. He is the second Adam who comes to our rescue. Mary is the new Eve, ever ready to help us.

These days there is a tendency to trivialise the complimentary nature of the male and female genders. What this means, is that gender differentiation is no longer seen as God's loving design for the human species. The distinctiveness of the different genders becomes for some interchangeable at one's pleasure and is no longer rooted in anthropology. It has harmed marriage in no small way. This is a far cry from today's Scripture reading – "a man must leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife the two become one body". Men and women are God's gift to each other, they are complimentary and we undermine at our peril this loving design of God.

Co-habitation and the use of contraception also makes light of the vocation of marriage. The latter means that the married couple are diluting the 'yes' they said to each other on their wedding day. The rupture between the unitive and procreative meaning of marriage, designed by the Creator, has gradually undermined Christian marriage.

To redeem this situation, the Church needs married people to witness more stridently to the beauty of their vocation. God's grace will not desert them. Today's young people have a right to expect this especially from Catholic spouses. As a Church, let us not disappoint them.