

21 B

The church describes marriage as a partnership of life and love which only death can dissolve. That love will 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 testimony to this. Here Jesus, at Mary's prompting, is instrumental into turning it from a day to forget into a day to remember. Its impact for married couples is plain for those 'with eyes to see'.

The Catholic Catechism teaches that one of the consequences of Adam and Eve's fall from grace was a rupturing of the original harmony which existed between the Creator and his creatures.

But we can reverse the situation if we do what Mary said at the marriage at Cana: "do whatever my Son tells you". When we ignore his teaching 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 design for the human family. When Pope Francis spoke to Bishops at World Youth Day 2016, his comments gained widespread attention in the secular media. He said "We are living a moment of the annihilation of man as image of God". Today children are being taught in school that one can choose one's biological identity without regard for the harmful consequences it leaves in its wake". The distinctiveness of the different genders becomes for some interchangeable at will. It has dented

marriage. People dispute that they have a nature, given by their bodily identity as male and female which defines who they are as persons. Pope Francis has warned that the radical ideology of gender would defy the truth about the human person and annihilate man as the image of God. In today's second reading St Paul tells us – "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 the creator.

Co-habitation and the wide use of contraception also defies the vocation of marriage. The latter means that the married couple are diluting the 'yes' they said to each other on their wedding day by arbitrarily withholding their fertility. When the fertility switch is turned off it doesn't always come on again. 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.