

21 B

The church describes marriage as a partnership of life and love between a man and a woman 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 also the harmony which should exist between husband and wife.

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 in **divorce** is ample evidence of this. In some cases this can have **painful consequences**, particularly for children. It can fuel childhood troubles. But Christ came to redeem marriage and **heal our wounded nature**. He can work through us to redeem the situation. 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 play down the complimentary nature of **maleness and femaleness**. We're not talking about individuals who need pastoral guidance in this area. When Pope Francis spoke to Bishops at World Youth Day some years ago, 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 told 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 just

a social construct, interchangeable at will. This has destabilised 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. We only reflect the image of God if we respect our male and female identity. In today's second reading St Paul tells us – "a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife the two become one body". They complement each other when they choose Christian marriage as their vocation in life. It's even tied up with our care of creation. If we lose respect for gender identity inscribed in our human nature by God, then why should we care about his natural creation. The two are intertwined.

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 back on again when you want it. The rupture between the unitive and procreative meaning of marriage, designed by the Creator, has gradually undermined the true nature of Christian marriage. St John Paul 11 said that this rupture is 'indicative of an absence of God in people's hearts'.

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. Young people have a right to expect this. As a Church, let us not disappoint them.