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Last week we saw how baptism is a key sacrament but a part of me says that a good Christian marriage should be on a par with it. If the marriage is celebrated between spouses who have faith in God and takes place in church then there is a good chance that their children will be baptised and follow in the footsteps of their parents.

It is interesting to note from today's Gospel that Jesus performed his very first miracle at a wedding breakfast. This is an indication of the high esteem in which he held it. The Catholic Church also places marriage high on its agenda - it is included as one of its seven sacraments. Marriage is a very significant moment in a person's life and not to be taken lightly. Just as Jesus laid down his life for his bride, the church, on the Cross, so, metaphorically speaking, married couples are asked to lay down their lives for each other. But for that to happen husband and wife need to understand what 'laying down their lives for each other' means.

I often say to engaged couples that some people marry *at the church* while others marry *in the Church*. '*At the church*' means that more attention is paid to the kind of building where the wedding is to take place rather than being a committed member of the said same Church community. '*In the church,*' on the other hand, means that the couple are already members of the believing community and their marriage is an extension of their faith in Jesus whom they believe will sustain them throughout their married life. When they come to mass the couple's love for each other will be conformed more and more into the likeness of Christ's love when He laid down his life for all of us on the cross.

The couple in today's gospel had Jesus and Mary top of the list of their invited guests. If Jesus and Mary have pride of place in the life of couples then despite setbacks all will turn out well as it did for the couple at Cana.

Much to their delight Jesus not only changed a small amount of water into any old wine but a huge amount into the very best. The conclusion we can draw from this is that if He is close to the spouses, the strains and stresses of family life won't get them down but will be opportunities for greater closeness as a couple. They will not be tempted to give up at the least hurdle.

We hear a lot of talk today about alternative family set-ups, and those who ditch marriage altogether. If this happens, unlike the couple at Cana, we keep Jesus and Mary at bay because this way of life contravenes the inherent nature of conjugal love. A fundamental ingredient of married love is the life-long commitment a man and woman publicly make to each other and to God on their wedding day.

At the end of the gospel today it says that 'Jesus let his glory be seen and the disciples believed in him'. Society today, more than ever, needs spouses to let the beauty of their married love to be seen so that those contemplating marriage may be inspired to follow in their footsteps.