

2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time “Vocations Strengthen the Body of Christ”

Fr. Frank Schuster

I have celebrated a number of weddings over the past nineteen and half years. And, to the best of my knowledge, most of the couples I have married are still together thanks be to God. The first wedding I celebrated was in the summer of 1999 at Sacred Heart parish in Bellingham. I was a very young priest and the couple were friends of mine from high school. It was a wonderful day. They are still married, doing well and have a beautiful family. I keep their picture in my house near where I pray each morning. The way I see it is their vocation strengthens mine. That is how I view the marriages I celebrate as a priest, your vocation strengthens mine. That isn't to say that we priests don't have our war stories regarding wedding celebrations. My favorite one was actually the second marriage I celebrated all those years ago. They were an older couple. The wedding was given to me by the pastor I was assigned to in those days. If memory serves me right, the bride had three previous marriages and the groom had four previous marriages. The pastor told me that they had all their previous marriages annulled, were properly disposed, and so were free to enter into this one. That was good enough for me. As you might expect it was a smaller ceremony and, since I was still “new”, I muddled through it despite my best intentions. However, afterwards in the sacristy as we were signing documents together, the groom started poking fun at me saying, “Gee Father, you seemed more nervous out there than we were.” To which I of course responded, “Well, you have done this more times than I have.” Not my shiniest moment as a priest, but there you have it. To the best of my knowledge, the marriage between them lasted and so all's well that ends well.

I sincerely love the Gospel reading we have this weekend. I find it very interesting that the first sign that Jesus performed in the Gospel of St. John was in fact at a wedding. I believe this speaks profoundly to how Jesus views marriage since his first miraculous sign was performed at one. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus likened the Kingdom of God to a wedding banquet. He also on a number of occasions referred to himself as the bridegroom and the Church as his bride. We see that Isaiah prophesied this about Jesus in our first reading, “For the Lord delights in you and makes your land his spouse”. This idea, that the Body of Christ is also the Bride of Christ, is an ancient idea that goes back to Jesus himself. When he teaches that in marriage the two shall become one flesh, he also understands himself in this way in terms of his relationship with those who are baptized into his Body. Baptism, in this sense, is very similar to a wedding. It is covenant that makes us one with Christ by welcoming us into his Body, the Bride of Christ the Church.

In our second reading from St. Paul to the Corinthians, St. Paul tells us that in the Body of Christ, “There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.” What this tells us is, just as in the human body there are many parts and yet one body, all of us have a vocation and a part to play in building up the Body of Christ here on earth. When we live our vocations well, the Church flourishes. When we live our vocations poorly, the Church suffers. As we have clearly seen from the news of late, this message includes priests, bishops and cardinals in how we live our vocations. However, it must also be said, this is true of

every person here today in the vocation God has called you to in the Body of Christ. You see, when we serve the Body of Christ well with the example of our lives, the Church does well. When we serve the Body of Christ poorly, we all suffer for it. Vocations that are lived well strengthen other vocations in the life of the Church. Vocations that are lived poorly wound everyone around us and the ripples can sometimes be felt all around the world.

As I pray about everything going on in the world today, and as I pray on the Gospel reading this weekend, what we really need in my opinion is for everyone in the Body of Christ to live our vocations well. We need a universal call to holiness now more than ever. Whether we preach at the pulpits or work on parish staffs or volunteer in Church ministries, a member of a family in the parish, or simply someone who worships faithfully from the pews, you and I need to live our vocations well in the life of the Church to the best of our ability and call each other to conversion when we don't. You see, when we live our vocations well in the Body of Christ, the Church will shine once more like the city on the hill that she is. The ordinary waters of our life will turn into like fine wine that blesses everyone around us by the measure of our fidelity to the bridegroom Christ our Lord.

How we accomplish this is in fact revealed to us in our Gospel reading today. You see, the last time we get to hear the mother of Jesus speak in the New Testament is in this story of the marriage at Cana. When the servers approach Mary wondering what they should be doing next now that the wine was running out, and as an aside, isn't this how the world feels like at times, like the wine is running out? When we feel like that in life, like the wine is running out, the mother of our Lord gives us all a very clear instruction. She lovingly points to her son Jesus and says, "Do whatever he tell you."