

Jesus the Bridegroom (8th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year B)

Hosea 2:16-20—The Lord and His Bride in the Desert

1. Bridegroom: “My husband,” not “My Baal [Master]” (2:16)
2. Bride: Israel will be faithful to the LORD (2:17; idolatry = infidelity)
3. Eternal Marriage: I will “betroth you to me forever” (2:19)
4. Union: “you shall know the LORD” (2:20; cf. Gen 4:1)

Psalm 103—The Lord is Kind and Merciful

1. Mercy: the LORD forgives his unfaithful bride (103:1-4, 8-13)

Mark 2:18-22—The Riddle of Jesus the Bridegroom

1. Fasting: abstaining from food; practiced by Pharisees and John’s disciples (2:18)
2. Riddle: Jesus’ response is a “parable” or “riddle” (2:19)
3. Bridegroom = “bridegroom” (Gk *nymphios*) Jesus (2:19)
4. Groomsmen = “sons of the bridal chamber” are disciples (2:19; cf. RSV)
5. Jewish Wedding: week of feasting, not fasting! (cf. Gen 29:26-27; Judg 14:17-18)
6. Jesus’ Wedding Day = the day Jesus is “taken away” (2:20)

The Living Tradition

St. Augustine: “Like a bridegroom Christ went forth from his nuptial chamber... He came even to the marriage-bed of the cross, and there, ascending it, he consummated a marriage. And when he sensed the creature sighing in her breath, he surrendered himself to torment for his bride in a communication of love.” (Augustine, *Sermo Suppositus* 120:3)

Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger): Jesus identifies himself here as the “bridegroom” of God’s promised marriage with his people and, by doing so, he mysteriously places his own existence, himself, within the mystery of God. In him, in an unexpected way, God and man become one, become a “marriage,” though this marriage—as Jesus subsequently points out—passes through the Cross, through the “taking away” of the bridegroom. (Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1:252)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (8th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year B)

1. What does it mean to you to think about Jesus not only as Lord and Savior, but also as the divine Bridegroom? How does it affect the way you see what happened during his crucifixion?

For Further Reading

1. Brant Pitre. *Jesus the Bridegroom: The Greatest Love Story Ever Told*. New York: Image, 2014.
2. Healy, Mary. *The Gospel of Mark*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.
3. Cahill, Michael. *The First Commentary on Mark: An Annotated Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
4. Oden, Thomas C. and Christopher A. Hall. *Mark*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament II. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1998.
5. Theophylact. *The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark*. House Springs: Chrysostom Press, 1993.