

Jesus the Bridegroom **The Greatest Love Story Ever Told**

The Bible Begins with a Wedding

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman a brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'Woman', because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. (Genesis 2:21-24)

The Bridegroom God of Israel: the Wedding at Mount Sinai

And you [Israel] grew up and became tall and arrived at full maidenhood... When [the LORD] passed by you again and looked upon you, behold, *you were at the age for love*; and I spread my skirt over you, and covered your nakedness: yea, *I betrothed myself to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine...* And I decked you with ornaments, and put bracelets on your arms... And I put a ring on your nose, and earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head... (Ezekiel 16:7-12)

The New Covenant and the Forgiven Bride of God

[Thus says the LORD:] "Therefore, behold, *I will allure her [Israel], and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her* [lit. 'speak to her heart']... And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt." (Hosea 2:14, 15)

I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, *and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant...* I will establish my covenant you, and you shall know that I am the LORD... *when I forgive all that you have done....*" (Ezekiel 16:59-63)

Fear not [Jerusalem],... for you will forget the shame of your youth... *For your Maker is your Husband, the LORD of hosts is his name*; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. (Isaiah 54:4-6)

The Riddle of John the Baptist

I am not the Messiah, but I have been sent before him. *He who has the bride is the bridegroom*; the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice; therefore this joy of mine is now full. He must increase, but I must decrease. (John 3:28-30).

The Wedding at Cana and the Wine of Salvation

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the wedding, with his disciples. When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what is that between you and me? *My hour has not yet come.*" His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast." So they took it. When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who drew the water knew), *the steward of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now."* This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him. (John 2:1-11)

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The Riddle of Jesus' Wedding Day

Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "*Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.*" (Mark 2:18-20)

The Last Supper

Now before the feast of Passover, when Jesus knew that *his hour had come* to depart out of this world to the Father, *having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.* (John 13:1)

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "*Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*" (Matthew 26:26-28)

The Crucifixion of Jesus

After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the scripture), "I thirst." A bowl full of common wine stood there; so they put a sponge full of the wine on hyssop and held it to his mouth. *When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished"* (Latin *consummatum est*); and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. [I]n order to prevent the bodies from remaining on the cross on the Sabbath... the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away... When they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. *But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.* He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth—that you also may believe. (John 19:25-35)

St. Augustine on the Marriage-Bed of the Cross

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 sense the creature sighing in her breath, he surrendered himself to torment for his bride in a communication of love. (Augustine, *Sermon Suppositus*, 120:3)

St. Paul on the "Great Mystery" of Christ and His Bride

Husbands, *love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her*, that he might sanctify her by the washing of the water with the word, that he might present the Church to himself in splendor, without any spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own *bodies*. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own *flesh*, but *nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church*, because we are members of his body. (Ephesians 5:25-30)

The Bridegroom Will Come Back for His Bride

"Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? *And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may also be.*" (John 14:1-3)

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The End of Time: the Wedding Supper of the Lamb

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for *the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready*; it was granted her to be clothed with fine line, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, “Write this: *Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb...* Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, *new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven as a bride adorned for her husband...*” (Revelation 19:6-9, 21:1-2)

Conclusion

Baptism

The entire Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church. Already Baptism, the entry into the people of God, is a nuptial mystery; it is so to speak the nuptial bath which precedes the wedding feast, the Eucharist. (CCC 1617)

The Eucharist

We find ourselves at the very heart of the Paschal Mystery, which completely reveals the spousal love of God. *Christ is the Bridegroom because "he has given himself":* his body has been "given", his blood has been "poured out"...The Eucharist is the Sacrament of our Redemption. *It is the Sacrament of the Bridegroom and of the Bride.* (John Paul II, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women*, no. 26)

Holy Matrimony

God who created man out of love also calls him to love—the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. For man is created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love. Since God created him man and woman, *their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man.* (CCC 1604)

Consecrated Virginity

Virgins, persevere in what you have begun to be. Persevere in what you will be. A great reward, a glorious prize and an excellent reward for purity are reserved for you... [Jesus says] “Those who will be found worthy of that world and of the resurrection from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage...” (Luke 20:35). *What we shall be, you have already begun to be. You already have in this world the glory of the resurrection.* (Cyprian of Carthage, *The Dress of Virgins* 22)

Priestly Celibacy

The priest is called to be the living image of Jesus Christ, the spouse of the Church. Of course, he will always remain as a believer alongside his other brothers and sisters... but in virtue of his configuration to Christ, the head and shepherd, the priest stands in a spousal relationship with regard to the community.... In his spiritual life, therefore, he is called to live out Christ’s spousal love toward the Church, his bride. (John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* no. 22)