

## Homily 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time 2025

I know a very special, inspiring and extraordinary woman. She has been married for over 50 years and she and her husband were, and still are, very much in love. She married a very wealthy and successful man with property. For the first few years of their marriage the couple lived in a very plush suburb of Glasgow, enjoying the company of 'high society' as they hosted dinner parties for their close friends. However, when an Irish priest introduced her husband to greyhound racing things began to unravel as he began to buy greyhounds and bet heavily on the 'dogs'. Debts piled up until he lost everything he owned until the bailiffs and the threat of imprisonment loomed. Desperation and guilt drove him to 'drink' and the inevitable downward spiral until he eventually hit 'rock bottom', leaving his family almost destitute. The woman's extraordinariness lies in the fact that she didn't leave her husband but remained loyal to him throughout these devastating developments in their married life.

Marriage is an image used throughout Holy Scripture for God's relationship with his people. In today's First Reading Isaiah, in 8th Century BC, describes how God's love for Israel is constant, creative, everlasting, faithful and without limits. No matter the depth of their sins and seriousness of their transgressions God will remain the steadfast and constant spouse. ('Though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them as white as snow.') Isaiah proclaims God's words of mercy and compassion to The Chosen People at a time when they chose to worship idols and prostitute themselves to foreign gods, "You shall no more be termed 'Forsaken', but you shall be called 'My Delight in Her', and your land 'Married' For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your God marry you." The same theme runs through the Book of The Prophet Hosea. Hosea marries a prostitute to forcefully illustrate to Israel the reality of God's perfect loving, creative, faithful and everlasting relationship with a sinful Israel. God will always forgive.

In today's Gospel, The Marriage Feast of Cana, St John describes how Jesus, at the request of Our Blessed Mother, turns water into wine. The historical or factual nature of this miracle is secondary to its deeper meaning. (Remember, miracles are visible signs/events that go beyond the known powers of nature and confirm that what Jesus says is true) The water which Jesus asks the servants to bring, twelve containers in total, represent the imperfect Old Testament Dispensation of The Law and The Prophets. However, in Jesus, of whom the wine is a sign, we have a much richer dawn of Salvation which not only confirms God's fidelity to a sinful Israel but goes radically further and promises that through his Son's Passion and Death all our sins and transgressions will be paid for in full. Thus, this God's new marital union with all peoples does not do away with The Law and The Prophets 'but brings them to perfection'.

The real extraordinariness of that special and inspiringly heroic woman is that she in her life and in her marriage, albeit relatively rare and even uncommon in a marriage nowadays, was a prophetic sign of God's love for us. Her life and her love, fidelity and constant forgiveness made her marriage as all Christian marriages should be, a sign of God's love in the world. Her prayers and patience were eventually rewarded,

and her Good Friday turned her Easter Sunday. Her husband, 20 years ago on the Feast of St Patrick, suddenly and almost miraculously stopped betting and drinking, reformed his life and rebuilt his business. He eventually, through hard work and dedication, bought a new home and earned great respect within his community.