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Father Cantalamessa on Christ at Cana

Pontifical Household Preacher Comments on Sunday's Readings

ROME, JAN. 12, 2007 (Zenit.org).- Here is a translation of a commentary by the Pontifical Household preacher, Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, on the readings from this Sunday's liturgy.

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Inviting Jesus to the wedding
Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
Isaiah 62:1-5; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; John 2:1-11

The Gospel of the second Sunday in Ordinary Time is the episode of the wedding feast at Cana. What did Jesus want to tell us by participating in a wedding feast?

Above all, in this way he in fact honored the marriage between man and woman, implicitly reaffirming that it is a beautiful thing, willed by the Creator and blessed by him. But he wanted also to teach us something else. With his coming the marriage between God and humanity promised through the prophets was realized under the name of the "new and eternal covenant."

At Cana, symbol and reality meet: The human marriage of two young people is the occasion to speak to us of another marriage, that between Christ and the Church, which will be achieved in "his hour" on the cross.

If we want to find out how the relationship between a man and woman in marriage should be according to the Bible, we must look at the relationship between Christ and the Church. Let us try to do it following the thought of St. Paul on this theme as it is expressed in Ephesians 5:35-33. At the origin and center of every matrimony, according to this vision, there must be love: "You, husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her."

This affirmation -- that matrimony is based on love -- seems to us to be discounted today. But that marriage should be based on love is something that has only been recognized for little over a century, and it is still not recognized everywhere.

For centuries and millenniums, marriage was a transaction between families, a way of providing for the conservation of a patrimony or a social obligation. The parents and the families were the protagonists, not the spouses, who often did not know each other until the day of the wedding.

Jesus, Paul says in the text of Ephesians, gave himself up "that he might present the Church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." Is it possible for the human husband to emulate Christ the bridegroom even in this? Can he remove his wife's wrinkles? Certainly!

There are wrinkles that result from a lack of love, from being left alone. The woman who feels herself to still

be important to her husband does not have wrinkles, or if she does, they are a different kind of wrinkles and they make her beauty grow rather than diminish it.

And wives, what can they learn from their model which is the Church? The Church makes herself beautiful only for her husband and not to please anyone else. She is proud and thrilled about her husband and does not cease to praise him. Translated onto the human plane this reminds fianceés and wives that their esteem and admiration is a very important thing for their fiancé or husband.

Sometimes to them this is the thing that counts the most in the world. It would be a grave thing to deny them this, to never have a word of appreciation for their work, for their ability to organize, their courage, their dedication to the family; for what he says, if he is a politician, for what he writes, if he is a writer, for what he paints, if he is an artist. Love is nourished by esteem and dies without it.

But there is something that the model of divine love calls husbands to above all: fidelity. God is faithful, always, despite everything. Today, this discourse about fidelity has become something rather delicate and no one any longer dares to risk it. And yet the principal reason for the disintegration of many marriages is precisely here, in infidelity. Some deny this, saying that adultery is the effect and not the cause of marriage crises. In other words, betrayal happens because there is nothing that exists any longer with one's spouse.

On occasion this is also true; but often what we have is a vicious circle. There is betrayal because the marriage is dead, but the marriage is dead precisely because treachery has already begun, perhaps at first only in the heart. That which is the most odious is when the traitor himself casts the fault entirely on the other and assumes the attitude of the victim.

But let us return to the Gospel episode, because it contains hope for all marriages, even the better ones. What happens in all marriages happens in the wedding feast at Cana. It begins with enthusiasm and joy (the wine is the symbol of this); but this initial enthusiasm, like the wine at Cana, comes to wane with the passage of time. Then things are done no longer for love and with joy, but out of habit. It descends upon the family, if we are not careful, like a cloud of sadness and boredom. Of this couple it must sadly be said: "They have no more wine!"

This Gospel episode points out to the couple a way to not fall into this situation or get out of if they are already in it: Invite Jesus to your wedding! If he is present, he can always be asked to repeat the miracle of Cana: transform the water into wine -- the water of habit, of routine, of frigidity, into the wine of love and joy better than the initial love and joy, just as the miraculous wine at Cana.

Inviting Jesus to your wedding means honoring the Gospel in your house, praying together, receiving the sacraments, taking part in the life of the Church.

Married couples are not always in the same place, religiously speaking. Perhaps one of them is a believer and the other is not, or at least not in the same way. In this case, the one who knows Jesus should invite him to the wedding and do it in such a way -- with kindness, respect for the other, love and coherence of life -- that Jesus soon becomes the friend of both. A "friend of the family!"

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