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A. M. D. G.

January 14, 2007  
Second Sunday of Ordinary Time—Year C  
**Wedding at Cana and Bishops on Contraception**  
St. Peter's Catholic Church, Plattsburgh, NY  
Rev. Bryan D. Stitt

What a beautiful scene! In the village of Cana in the region of Galilee we see a wedding feast with days of eating and drinking, music and dancing, a man and a woman, and Jesus and Mary.

I've loved this passage ever since I was young and was told that this was the first of the miracles that Jesus performed. I figured that that meant it was important. I was right.

It shows the compassion of Jesus—coming right into where He was needed, right into the young couple's very lives.

It shows the loving intercession of Mary. She told Jesus, "They have no wine;" and then to the waiters she gave the best advice ever given to mankind, "Do whatever He tells you."

It shows what goodness and richness comes when Christ is invited into our lives.

And it shows the dignity that Christ gave to marriage—making the union of man and woman a sacrament, and allowing them to share in the divine life of God by becoming a mirror of the Love of God for His Church.

Isaiah prophesized this in our first reading today which read: "As a young man marries a virgin your Builder will marry you, and as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride so shall your God rejoice in you." Basically what Isaiah is saying is that the love that a husband has for his wife is an image of the Love of Christ for His bride the Church—a love so real and true that it is willing to do anything for the other. It is a total self-gift, selfless, laying down his life, it is an extreme call.

All this imagery of marriage got me thinking recently—you deserve an apology from me.

Back in November the bishops of the U.S. released a document entitled: *Married Love and the Gift of Life*. It is a beautiful and eye-opening document explaining the Church's teaching against the use of artificial contraception. As administrator of the parish I had a responsibility to share this information with you. I did not. I didn't even put a blurb in the bulletin about it. For this I apologize.

To make up for lost time, may I please say how important the Church's teaching on family planning is to our world today?

As you all well know, we live in a world with sky-rocketing divorce rates, millions of abortions, a pandemic of pornography, high rates of cohabitation, rape, infidelity, and fatherless families. Now these cannot be explained solely by society's acceptance of contraception, but from what the scholars tell me, it is a big factor.

In response, the bishop's document speaks of the true beauty and goodness of sexual love. It speaks of the "body language" of the complete gift of one person to another—fully giving and fully receiving. It speaks of how this gift is undermined through the use of

contraception. By its very use one cannot give oneself to or receive another fully—its as if to say, “I give you everything except...”

Besides this, they often work as abortifacients. Many physical and chemical contraceptives cause abortions of human life in its earliest stages.

They also endanger the health of the women. And, as with any sinful act, they are not open to the will of God.

All this being said, the document does not simply state things from the negative perspective. It goes on to explain the alternative. For, contrary to popular belief, the Church is not saying that families should have as many children as is absolutely possible. The Church does not think that women’s bodies are “baby making machines.”

Therefore the bishops promote the use of Natural Family Planning. (And if there is anything in our world that is commonly misunderstood, it is Natural Family Planning.) For those who wish to avoid pregnancy at a certain time, NFP has an over 98% accuracy rating. It does not rely on drugs or physical barriers. Instead it uses the God given signals in the woman’s beautifully created body to determine fertility.

And most of all, NFP is to be promoted because it is open to following the will of God. After all, can there be anything which we want more than to do the will of God in our lives?

The document concludes with suggestions on where to go from here. The document itself is very short—only about 10 pages, but it gives a very good bibliography by which it encourages people to seek out more information. We all have a responsibility to be well-informed on this important matter.

Besides that, the Bishops simply promote the basics—Confession and the Eucharist. For those who have been using artificial contraceptives they encourage the value of the healing grace of Reconciliation followed by the unity and communion of the Eucharist.

Back in 1968 when Pope Paul VI reasserted the Church’s teaching with his infamous encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, he predicted that with widespread use of contraception would come: increased sexual infidelity, increased premarital sex, sexual exploitation of women, pornography, and increased divorce. The world said he was crazy. And even some of his closest advisors discouraged him from releasing such a document.

Now almost 40 years later *Humanae Vitae* is commonly held up as a sure sign of the infallibility of the pope when he teaches in matters of faith and morals.

It is this age old truth that our bishops have once again proclaimed to the world in their recent document. And we are reminded of that truth today as we look at this beautiful scene of the wedding at Cana.

We are reminded of the importance of welcoming Christ into our lives. We are reminded of Christ the Divine Bridegroom. And we are reminded of the richness and sweetness of life, love, and marriage when Christ is allowed to be present.

May we always be open to receiving the grace He wishes to share with us and then mirror that generosity in all that we say and do.