



Day 36: Spouse

Jesus the Bridegroom

“After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said... “I am thirsty.” John 19:28

As Jesus is the Son of the Father and our brother, the Gospel clearly reveals that He also is the Bridegroom of the Church. At first glance, it might be kind of odd to think of Jesus as the Bridegroom, or in other words a husband. Since He never married, how can we say that He had the identity of a husband? First, it is good to establish that marital imagery is used by God all throughout Scripture. As God revealed Himself to the chosen people, He spoke to them and pursued them as a husband would his bride. The Prophet Isaiah wrote: “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 54:5). When the Father sent His beloved Son to become man and to save His chosen people, He was sending the Bridegroom, the husband, to save His Bride, the Church. Thus, the most foundational truth of marital love is sacrificial love, the Bridegroom shedding his blood and laying down His life for His Bride. This is not an abstract love. At the moment of crucifixion, Jesus, the King of Love, sees real faces in His mind and heart, the faces of you and me, and of all the sons and daughters of God. From the depths of His heart, says, “I thirst.” (cf. John 19:28). He thirsts for our love, time, attention, conversion, and our salvation. On the cross, Jesus the Bridegroom lives His mission of sacrificial love to the full.

Mary, Mother of the Bridegroom

If the foundational truth of spousal love is sacrificial love expressed by Jesus’ thirst on the Cross, Mary experienced first-hand Jesus the Bridegroom living His mission. The Catechism teaches us that when the spear pierced His heart on the Cross, blood and water flowed out, which symbolize the new life of the Church (CCC 766). It is in the fullness of the Paschal Mystery - the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus – that His sacred mission will come to fruition. Mary was there every step of the way. She stands by her Son, the Bridegroom, to support Him, encourage Him, and to bear witness to His mission of sacrificial love.

St. Juan Diego and Us

You are called to live a life of deep sacrificial love. As a man, husband, and Father, sacrificial love is at the heart of your mission. In one way, this call deeply resonates with us as we love our families, but at the same time it deeply challenges us. If Jesus is the King of Love, setting the perfect example of sacrificial love on the cross, how do we love like this? Brother, we are called every day to follow the King of Love to the cross. We are His soldiers in His Kingdom, called to constantly lay our lives down to bring new life to those around us. This way of 'sacrificial love' is the way that St. Juan Diego lived his mission. In response to the great, miraculous sign of the Tilma, he left his old life behind and completely reoriented his life to God in a new way. His life was not about him at all, but totally given to God and his people. The sacred Tilma became the center of his life and mission. He lived a hermit-type of life, which also bears witness to a beautiful sacrificial love and a heart that is fully given to God and his mission. An early description of him at this time indicates that "he prostrated before the Lady of Heaven and invoked her fervently; frequently he confessed, received the Eucharist, fasted, did penance, disciplined himself...and he would hide in the dark to give himself solitude for prayer and to invoke the Lady of Heaven." (*Nican Motecpana*, p. 305) In this way, St. Juan Diego was a true friend of the Bridegroom, allowing his heart to be constantly transformed by the love of Jesus. Brother, you too are a friend of the Bridegroom. You are called to embody the deep sacrificial love of Jesus in your life. This is your mission.

Prayer

O Jesus, we adore You, we love You, and we thank You for the gift of Your presence. You are the beloved Son of the Father and also the Bridegroom of the Church. On the Cross, You laid down Your life for us in perfect sacrificial love to fulfill Your mission to bring salvation to the whole world. Teach us how to love like You and to lay our lives down for others. We ask You now to hear this prayer.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of God and Mother of us, draw us close to your heart. As you stood at the foot of the Cross and supported Jesus in His perfect sacrifice of love, now come to us and teach us how to love like Him. Please come and fill us with your love.

Amen.

After reading today's reflection, pray the Litany of Restoration of Sonship.