

Take-Home 14. The Domestic Church and the Marriage Supper

From the Beginning

What We Found

Scripture opens in a garden with a marriage and closes in a city with a marriage supper. The whole Bible is bracketed by weddings.

The invitation to communion in the Roman Rite adapts Revelation 19:9, right after behold the Lamb of God. We have been hearing an invitation to a wedding since childhood.

In Revelation 21 the Bride turns out to be a city. She is a people with a common life, which is why a Christian marriage is never a private arrangement.

Jesus says that in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage. Marriage is a sign, and a sign gives way to what it signifies. The Church's hope is that nothing good is lost in God, and no spouse has to be anyone's final happiness.

The Council calls the family a domestic church, and the Catechism calls parents the first heralds of the faith for their children and says they bear the first responsibility for their education. Not the parish. The parents.

Ordinary and repeatable beats ambitious and abandoned. A decade in the car every day for thirty years will form a family.

The good wine was kept until now. With God the best is later, and Scripture's final vision includes a wedding feast, which makes your wedding a rehearsal for a bigger one.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: AN EARLY CHRISTIAN DESCRIPTION OF A CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Writing to his wife around the turn of the third century, Tertullian described the beauty of a marriage between two Christians: two who share one hope, one discipline, and one service, who pray together and fast together, who instruct and encourage one another, and who are found together in the church and at the table.

What he describes is what tonight is about, and Christians were doing it by the early third century.

Summary of To His Wife, Book II, chapter 8.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL ON THE FAMILY AS A CHURCH

The Council taught that the family is, in a sense, a domestic church, in which parents by word and example are the first heralds of the faith to their children.

The word to notice is heralds. Not supporters of the parish's efforts. First heralds. The Catechism carries the same language at CCC 1656 and says at CCC 2223 that parents bear the first responsibility for their children's education.

Lumen Gentium 11, and CCC 1655-1658.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ON MAKING A HOME INTO A CHURCH

Preaching to ordinary married Christians, St. John Chrysostom urged husbands and wives to make the household itself into a church, and to take up Scripture together at home rather than leaving it to the assembly.

He is a good final voice because he asks for nothing exotic. Read together, pray together, eat together, and let the house be consistent with the faith.

Summary of a theme in his preaching to married Christians, associated especially with Homily 20 on Ephesians.

Live It This Week

- **Start the one practice this week.** The single thing you named in the Couple Conversation. This week, not after the wedding.
- **Put the sealed sheet somewhere you will find it on your first anniversary.** Both halves. Do not read it again before then.
- **Work the Before the Altar list as a checklist.** Fourteen weeks of items are now one page of things to finish before the day.
- **Invite somebody to dinner.** The first Christians broke bread in their homes, and some churches met in houses. Start before the wedding rather than after, because the habit is easier to begin than to add.
- **Go to confession together before the wedding,** and read the nuptial blessing aloud once more the week of.

BEFORE THE ALTAR

The list is now a checklist. Take the fourteen Before the Altar items and finish them: documents and permissions, the ritual choices, the readings and music, the natural family planning course, the financial disclosure, the two people you would call at two in the morning, the guest list decisions, and confession before the day.

This week. Start the one domestic church practice you named, and put your sealed sheet somewhere you will find it on your first anniversary.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Revelation 19:9

Before next session: Nothing further is assigned. Go to your weddings, and tell your leader how they went.

Catechism: CCC 1618-1620, 1642, 1655-1658, 2204-2206, 2223.