

3 Advent B SML 2017
JN 1:6-8, 19-28

I'd like everyone here who is married to go back to their wedding day. I'd like those here who are not married, but would like to be married, to imagine their wedding day. Now, those of you who are married better be smiling during this guided meditation or you're going to hear about it in the car. Depending whether you were or will be as the bride or the groom, you are standing at one end of the aisle, and your intended is standing at the other. And with all the anticipations of the blessings the two of you will receive during your married life ahead of you, someone on the end of the pew steps into the aisle and says, "This will never last." Talk about an Allie McBeal scratch of the record . . .

I mention this because as we are all preparing for Christmas, Christmas is not so much about a birthday as much as Christmas is very much about a wedding. Yes, we are preparing for the birth of Jesus. But Jesus' birth is not like ours. We were conceived and nine months later we were born. Before we were conceived we did not exist. That's not the case with Jesus. The Son of God always existed. There was never a time when He was not. There was a time when we were not.

We celebrate at Christmas that God became flesh. God became one of us. Two, God and Man, became one in Jesus. The two became one. That's a marriage. That's what this Christmas is all about, and to back this up, let's look at the scriptures.

This evening's (morning's) gospel is about John the Baptist. And he is being questioned as to who he is.

- ✓ Are you the Christ?
- ✓ Are you Elijah?
- ✓ Are you the prophet?

Flip a few pages and the last thing John the Baptist said about himself is this. The bridegroom is the one who has the bride. The friend of the bridegroom (who was John the Baptist) rejoices when he hears the bridegroom's voice. And now He must increase and I must decrease. John thinks of himself as the best man. Jesus identified Himself as the bridegroom in the gospel story about fasting. Jesus said, "Can the guests of a wedding fast when the bridegroom is there? No. But the day will come when the bridegroom is taken away, and on that day, they will fast."

In today's first reading, God adorns us like a bridegroom with a diadem, like a bride bedecked with jewels.

In the first reading on Christmas, we read from the prophet Isaiah, “As a young man marries a virgin, your Builder shall marry you. And as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so shall your God rejoice in you.” (62:5)

So go back to your wedding day, standing at the end of the aisle, waiting to see the doors open, everybody turning and looking at you, as your intended stood at the other end of the aisle. Got the image?

Christmas is about desire, God’s desire, and who God desires is you and me. He wants us, and since everybody here wants love, and since God Is Love, everybody here wants God, even if many of us do not know that yet. And this Christmas will be the proof of it. Some of us will get inundated with “stuff,” things, new gadgets, toys. They’re all great. That’s fine. But they don’t work. They don’t satisfy, they’re not enough. Why? Because you want love, and so do I.

Christmas is fairy tale like, except that it’s true. The message is we are completely loved. You are infinitely loved. For you God has crossed the dividing line between heaven and earth and has become one of us. This is not mere sentiment. He has done it to act. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says there

is no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. And that's why he came. Jesus was born to die.

So let's go back to the church aisle. Imagine the one standing at the end of the aisle, longingly, with great desire. Except understand this. The One is Jesus,

- ✓ and he will be at the end of this aisle as you're walking down,
- ✓ and he will be at the end of this aisle as you're walking down,
- ✓ and he will be at the end of this aisle as you're walking down,

and as each one of us approaches Him, and He is going to give Himself to us.

What does love want? Love wants union. God is love. God wants union with us, and so He gives Himself to us under in the Blessed Sacrament, in the Eucharist. It's a real union. It's sacramental.

In a very real way, it's a lot like Mary and Joseph. They were betrothed but they did not yet live together. It is not at all like engagement. It is not at all like the right way to marry today. Betrothal in the time of Jesus was a real marriage; they just had not lived in the same home but they were legally

married. Joseph just had not taken Mary across the threshold of his house.

That's a lot like our situation. We are already united to the Lord. We already belong to Him. He just has not carried us across the threshold yet. He hasn't brought us into His Father's house, but there is a threshold. And there is a house.

Advent is not a season of passivity. It's not just a season to sit and wait. Advent is:

- ✓ a season to make decisions,
- ✓ a season to respond,
- ✓ a season to give an answer.

Because during Advent, God is proposing. A voice of one. It was in last Sunday's gospel according to Mark, and it is in this Sunday's gospel according to John.

So again, here's the plan. We need to keep our eyes and ears open for ICNU moments. ICNU – I see in you! I see in you a need for Jesus Christ. When you run into someone, and it looks like they're going through the motions of Christmas, but lacking the spirit of Christmas, Who is Jesus Christ, I challenge all of us to be a voice of one this Christmas. I see in you a need for Jesus and I happen to find Jesus at SML, so come to Church. And on this third Sunday of Advent, Gaudate Sunday,

JOY Sunday, they must see joy of Jesus Christ in you, or your offer will ring so very empty. I've been here two and a half years, and there are some who are here every week, and I have yet to see them smile. And I pray for them by name. I'm still trying to learn names, but when I see them week after week not smiling, I will ask their name so I can pray for them by name, because either their heart is incredibly heavy, or they just don't show joy.

After Christmas, we're going to have three Mass Mobs inviting people to Church on January 14, February 4 and February 11, also explained in the bulletin. We had a Mass Mob here on 9/11/16, the 15th anniversary of that tragedy and we filled the Church.

So for now, make sure you like is on Facebook and follow us on Twitter, so when the Mass Mobs are posted on Facebook and Twitter, and you repost them, you'll be a voice of one.

The voice of one for Jesus, who is popping the question this Christmas. He's popping the question, and you will have to answer it and so do I. The question is simply this. Will you be Mine? Will you marry Me? And what will we say?