

'Tis the season... for weddings

Part 5 in a Series: Ownership

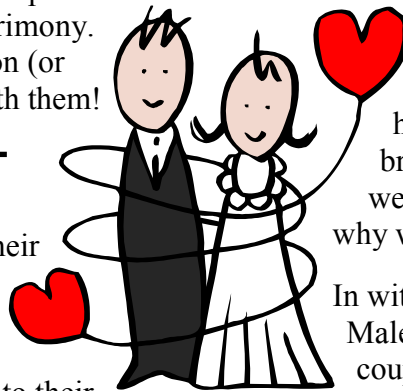
Fr. Maletta recently spoke at all the Masses, in reference to the new marriage policy for the parish. The policy is not set forth to be a listing of all the rules and regulations - the "can-do's" and "cannot-do's." Rather, the policy is given to couples to help them understand the sacramental nature of their wedding and the marriage ritual. Christ likened the love between a husband and a wife to the love he has for his Church. It is because of this profound mystery that the Church protects the celebration of marriage so carefully. Following are some reflections on "**OWNERSHIP**" of the wedding day. In these summer weeks we will "unpack" different aspects of the celebration of the sacrament of matrimony. If you know someone getting married soon (or not so soon) share this series of articles with them!

It is common for couples to come to their wedding day with a composite picture in their mind of what the wedding ceremony will look like. It is a combination of every wedding they have ever seen in movies or been to - with the elements that speak best to their relationship extracted from each and every experience. Most brides-to-be have dreamed of their wedding day (down to the smallest details!) and most grooms-to-be want the day to be perfect for their bride.

It is the honor and joy for the parish to celebrate this sacred and joyous occasion with the couple. While this is an exciting time, it is also a time of conflicting demands and emotions. In addition to all the years of hopes and dreams on the part of the couple, many other people try to influence wedding arrangements so that the event will be "meaningful." It is important to remember that what really makes a wedding memorable is the people involved, their faith and the joy of celebrating the sacrament, especially the bride and groom who clearly love each other and want to share their joy with others.

For Christians, marriage is celebrated not only as a human institution, but as a sacrament intended by Christ to reflect his love for the Church. The sacrament of marriage is a vocation within the Church which is profoundly "religious." Candidates for marriage must be willing to participate in this sacrament, this "ministry" in the community. Couples, therefore, do not re-create Christian marriage to fit their own vision; they must try to live up to an ideal which finds its origin in Christ.

During some liturgical planning sessions, pre-conceived ideas of wedding day novelties are at odds with the above understanding of the sacrament of marriage. Emotions can run high as one or the other of the bride or groom says "this is our wedding day, we don't understand why we can't do (this) or (that)."



In witnessing a wedding, Father Maletta will usually speak to the couple right before they make their vows and impart the "secret" of marriage to them. He tells them that as wonderful and right as everything is on the wedding day, it is human love - and human love will fail at one time or another. But by giving their human love over to God in the sacrament of marriage, God gives back to the couple divine love - and that will get them through anything, because divine love lasts forever.

The wedding liturgy of Christ's Church is meant to give expression to this reality. The couple make their vows to each other in the midst of the assembly, not because it's nice to have loved ones present on their special day, but because the sacrament rightly belongs to the whole Church. With this understanding, the couples' wedding day is not the culmination of their marriage, it is only the beginning!