

Homily  
Memorial of Saint Clare, Virgin  
(Friday of the 18<sup>th</sup> Week in OT)  
August 11, 2023

Who has ever been to a wedding, yours or anyone else's? We all remember the words, "I, [state your name], take you [state the other's name]... for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health..." These are the words of Consent. These words are the Form of the Matter and Form we all know make up our Sacraments. All Sacraments consist of Matter and Form; in Matrimony, the Form are the words the Bride and Groom, their Consent, exchange with each other. They, themselves, make up the Matter.

Jesus is the Bridegroom. Jesus gives Himself totally and completely to us, His Bride. He gives Himself fully, 100%, without reservation, withholding nothing, even if we don't return His affection. And all He wants in return is all of us, fully and completely, 100%, without reservation, withholding nothing. And He does not withhold His affection from us. That's what marriage is all about; we give ourselves to the other, not 50/50, not waiting for the other to start before we begin, expecting nothing in return, but hoping for everything in return.

Jesus says, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." He is not demanding, but informing. The statement, 'Whoever wishes,' leaves us open to our own free will. But there are consequences for not following Him, "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

St. Claire was born into a noble family. "Her mother received a sign that her (*not-yet-born*) daughter would be a bright light of God in the world." Claire would refuse marriage at age 15 and escape her home at 18 to follow St. Francis, staying in Benedictine convent. At 22, Francis names her Abbess of what we now know as the Poor Claires. Today, the Poor Claires number over 20,000 sisters in 16 federations in over 70 countries. Claire is a shining example of obedience and compliance to God's call to, "deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."

It seems so easy to pick up my cross and follow Jesus, until it isn't easy. Life is hard; life can be cruel; life hits me with curve balls; life can sometimes nearly break me. It is then that I am tempted to throw down my cross and say, "this is too hard; how can I keep this up?" And, it is then, that, if we keep our focus on Jesus, we are strengthened, encouraged, healed and restored.

This Mass, and every Mass that has ever been celebrated, ever will be celebrated, is a continuation of the Last Supper and Christ's Passion – the Marriage Feast of the Lamb. Christ gives himself fully and we receive Him fully. We consummate this Marriage of the Lamb by Form and Matter. Jesus becomes present with the words of consecration and the bread and the wine, Form and Matter. We receive Jesus when the Minister of Holy Communion says, "The Body of Christ." And we respond, "Amen," the Form. We do not say any other words; we don't take away or add to these words. These are the words, the Form, of the Holy Union between Jesus, the Bridegroom and us, His Bride, the Matter. Form and Matter. And then, now that we are one with Him, we go out into the world and be Christ for one another. So, let's pick up our cross, embrace all that life has to offer, both the good and the bad, give glory to God and be Christ for one another.