

Holy Matrimony

Megan Christine Crowley ~ Andrew James Vogel

Genesis 2:7, 18-24

Ephesians 5:1-2, 22-33

John 2:1-11

One of Michelangelo's greatest, most recognizable paintings is entitled "The Creation of Man." It graces the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome. In this painting, Michelangelo depicts the dramatic moment when God gives life to Adam. Adam's body is reclining in a relaxed position as God extends Himself to the one whom He created from the dust of the earth. There is something delightful in the painting that captures this day. It can be easily missed. The eye is naturally drawn to the life-giving finger of God and the receptive nature of man's creation. Truly, it is beautiful. But there's more. Hidden in the crook of God's left arm is the woman, the sublime Eve. She is already alive, already awaiting her husband, her eyes are *locked* on him and an expression of eagerness, appreciation lights her face.

Michelangelo confronts us with a marvelous ambiguity. Is this the moment when God breathes into Adam the breath of life or is this the moment when Adam awakens from his sleep? Is this the moment of Adam's creation or is it his resurrection? Michelangelo opens a beautiful door to a deep theological thought: Man's creation does not begin with a birthday; man's creation begins with a wedding day.

It is not good for the man to be alone. The image of God has a plural character. The image of God is manifested when two become one. When God forms Adam, He already has Eve in mind. When the Creator brings forth Eve, she is given as the very embodiment of God's own love for Adam. The creation of man is not the creation of individuals, autonomous, detached, independent. The creation of man consists of a bond, a nuptial communion; God binds two into one. The creation of man begins not with a birthday but with a wedding day. Man's life in the image of God begins with a divinely arranged marriage.

Arranged marriage; I must admit that as a younger man the practice of arranged marriage seemed archaic, primitive, barbaric, unenlightened. But as a father of three with only one left in the barn, the idea is starting to appeal to me. What makes today so brilliant? To be sure, love is in bloom. But is it man's desire that makes this day so magnificent or is it God's arrangement that forms the marital bond? It is God who laments that Adam is alone. It is God who puts Adam to sleep, who builds Eve from Adam's side, who brings her to the man. It is God's own design that binds them into one; increase and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Is God involved in today's new reality? Who arranged marriage? Who arranged *this* marriage?

Let's not give Mollie Z. too much credit. Oh, she's a savvy girl. The Lutheran Church needs savvy girls, but God is always at His workbench using every tool available to bring man and woman together. Our lives are in His hands and His fingerprints are all over this union. As is my custom, I asked the betrothed for a reason. It's a simple homework assignment. Why are you committing yourself to this man, why this woman? Some view it as a light-hearted exercise. The last wedding that I officiated at, the happy couple wrote their reasons on the back of a paper

plate, took a picture of it and texted it to me. Do you think these two approached it somewhat differently? Each of them wrote me a short novel.

The reasons AJ listed for “why Megan” began to pile up in layers like a giant baklava. He didn’t know where to stop. Megan, this man has *considered* you. He sees you. He prizes you. He is enraptured and fascinated. The promise of living a deeply Christian life with you has AJ’s heart and mind beaming. You are, to him, the epitome of the church, looking to others’ needs, serving without self-awareness, beautiful and humble and transcendent. Andrew James, Megan is a prize and you are a blessed man. She values what is valuable and what she wrote me was rich in detail. It wasn’t a brief list of virtues but a specific articulation of exactly the person you are – the awareness your bride has of you is remarkable. You have captured her heart for a reason – you project strength, sacrifice, loyalty, fidelity. Megan knows the lofty place you have for her. By your character, you have captured, and you hold the field, of her heart.

They have no wine. Do you detect a note of desperation? Mary is implicitly asking Jesus to act. Jesus takes the request seriously and the note of desperation is not lost on Him. Wine? He jumps straight to blood; He jumps straight to sacrifice and a new creation. How do we know this? We know this by virtue of what He said: “My hour has not yet come.” Whenever Jesus speaks about His “hour” it is always in connection to His death. Remember, the Lord Christ came to our broken world in search of a bride. No suitable helpmate was found for Him. Why? Because this world is colossal stew of sin. He is holy. There can be no union between the holy and the profane. We must be cleansed. Blood, divine blood, God’s blood is the only agent to sanctify sinners. Will God’s Son provide His blood?

The steward of the feast is astounded! The bouquet, the flavor, the richness – he had never tasted anything like this. Where did this come from? Only the Messiah could summon this kind of wine. The new wine of grace unleashed joy and it is unleashed in a marriage banquet. The new wine at Cana pointed to the blood that would flow from the new wine skin of the Messianic Bridegroom – true God and true man in one person. Blood flowed from Christ’s side in death and His bride now drinks of it and become one with Him. From that union, the church becomes fruitful with grace and multiplies His love, fills the earth with forgiveness and subdues darkness with His light. AJ and Megan are children of this nuptial union between Christ and His bride. They reflect that beauty, that wholesomeness, that internal love and fidelity. It is their marriage that draws us together today but it is the Marriage of Christ and His bride which brings us into a holy house, a church. It is that marriage which has been arranged by our heavenly Father since before the foundation of the world.

There is newness here. It is beautiful in our eyes – the raw and wonderful and exhilarating day of marriage. In Christ we are all new. We take part as spectators, witnesses to the marriage of two delightful people. But in this Divine Service we are more than spectators – we are participants. Loved and treasured by the One who sees *us*, who prizes *us*, who wants nothing more than to make *us* His own. Jesus doesn’t claim His bride because of her innate beauty or the bloom of her body. We are, in our sin, ugly and deformed and yet His banner over us is love. Adam submits to the piercing of His side for the sake of His beloved. Jacob endures years of servitude to claim his bride. Hosea endures public ridicule for the one who was arranged for him and Jesus must be lifted up on a cross. To fulfill the woman’s plea and provide true nuptial

wine, Jesus gladly pours out the richest commodity this world has ever known – His royal blood. Good Friday is Jesus' wedding day. He poured out His blood for the feast. He rose from His sleep on the Third Day and His bride has had her eyes locked on Him ever since.

How noble and good and loving and true our Lord is. AJ is the emblem of the Lord Christ this day and will remain so for his bride. What an honor for you, sir. What beauty and purpose and delight there will be for you as you aspire to love Megan as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. She will flourish as a woman, as a Christian, as you demonstrate what love truly is by your manner. It is fitting to have a radiant bride – for the church is the most beautiful entity on the face of the planet. Megan is the emblem of the church. Looking to others' needs, serving the least and keeping her eyes locked on the object of her affection, her Bridegroom. At last! The marriage feast has come. Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.