When I was ordained in the spring of 1996, I was offered the privilege to celebrate my first parish wedding at the request of the pastor I was assigned to. They were a nice couple. Both of them had previous marriages. They had gone through the annulment process and were found free to marry in the Church. Since this was the first time I celebrated a wedding ceremony in my new assignment, in a church building I wasn’t familiar with, and didn’t personally know the couple, I was noticeably nervous during the ceremony. After the wedding, the groom came up to me, slapped me on the back and said, “Father, you did a good job but you looked more nervous than we did”. I regrettably replied, “Well, you’ve done this more times than I have.” That was not my shiniest moment. Because of the annulments, this was their first sacramental marriage and the Church is a welcoming home to those who have broken marriages too. The institution of marriage is very important to Jesus that we rightfully call marriage a Sacrament.

In the Gospel of John, it’s at a marriage when Jesus begins His ministry by turning water into wine. St. John’s Gospel doesn’t use the word “miracle” like the other Gospels. It uses the word “sign”, a remarkable moment that points to some greater reality. This wine Jesus made was better than the first offered to the guests is symbolic of the new covenant with Jesus being better than the old covenants. Also significant is the water that Jesus used to make wine. It was greywater, water used to wash the guests’ feet. The message is that Jesus can take whatever greywater that’s polluting us and turn it into fine wine. This is a sign that points to Jesus’ desire to forgive and redeem. The prophet Isaiah likened God’s covenant with His Chosen People to a failed marriage. A theme you get over and over in the Old Testament is Israel’s infidelity to the covenant. Isaiah prophesied that a savior would come and cleanse the Chosen People from their iniquities and provide them a new covenant. This future is spelled out by Isaiah, “No more shall people call you ‘forsaken,’ or your land ‘desolate’; you shall be called ‘my delight’ and your land espoused. As a bridegroom rejoices in his bride so shall God rejoice in you.”

Jesus likened the Kingdom of God to a wedding banquet. Jesus saw Himself as the bridegroom with his bride, the Church, in a marriage, where the two become one, humanity and divinity, no longer two but one. We celebrated the anniversary of this marriage on Christmas, the feast of the Incarnation. It’s a marriage that can’t be undone. Even if we’re unfaithful, God is faithful. Jesus knew well how sinful we can be and how far we can fall. God could’ve easily dismissed humanity as a fickle spouse with fidelity issues. In marriage, however, Jesus teaches that the two become one. What God brings together, no one must separate. Since God has now married Himself to humanity and become one flesh with us in the marriage of the incarnation, we can imagine how Jesus could suffer and atone for our sins in His very flesh. His Body is inseparably one with His spouse. Because our humanity is inseparably one with Jesus’ divinity, we can rise with Him on the last day. The only person that can frustrate this divine plan is me.

In the Sacrament of Baptism, our souls were espoused to the Lord like a wedding when the two become one. On the days we’re unfaithful, Jesus is faithful. On the days we fall down, Jesus is there to pick us up. Jesus can take any greywater we give Him and turn it into fine wine.