**Good Friday Homily: Jesus the Bridegroom**

**Friday of the Passion of the Lord**

*By Fr. Jason Mitchell LC*

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Isaiah 52:13-53:12
Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9
John 18:1-19:42

There is an excellent new book by Brant Pitre on [*Jesus the Bridegroom*](http://www.imagecatholicbooks.com/book/219101/jesus-the-bridegroom/) (Image 2014). It has helped me understand the mystery we celebrate today and I'd would like simply to summarize the major points of his reflections, offering them to you for your prayer and meditation on this holy day.

In the Old Testament, the relationship between God and his people is characterized as a marriage covenant: God is the divine bridegroom, Israel is his bride. When Israel sins against God after the covenant of Mount Sinai by worshiping the golden calf, this idolatrous act is considered a spiritual adultery, a betrayal of the relationship between God and his bride (Pitre, Jesus the Bridegroom, 13). God, however, does not give up on his bride and promises, through the prophets, to forgive her by establishing a new marriage covenant with her (Pitre, Jesus the Bridegroom, 17). Through this new covenant, Israel and all nations, will not just be forgiven but will be brought into an everlasting union with God.

At the time of Jesus, then, Israel is waiting her Bridegroom. John the Baptist is the one who identifies Jesus as the Bridegroom (John 3:28-30) and Mary is the one who asks Jesus the Bridegroom for the wine of salvation (John 2:1-11). The time of Jesus' three-year public ministry is the time of the week-long wedding feast. His disciples do not fast during this time and called the "sons of the bridechamber" (Mark 2:19-20). On his wedding day, Good Friday, Jesus is taken away by the soldiers to the marriage chamber of the Cross. "Just as God consummated the marriage to Israel in the Tabernacle of Moses through the blood of the covenant, so too Jesus will consummate the marriage to his bride through the blood of the cross" (Pitre, Jesus the Bridegroom, 93).

It was customary for the Jewish bridegroom to wear a crown on his wedding day. Jesus's wedding crown is a crown of thorns. It was also customary for the Jewish bridegroom to be dressed like a priest, with a seamless garment. On the Cross, Jesus will watch as the soldiers cast lots for his seamless garment. Crowned as king and robed as high-priest, Jesus enters into the tabernacle of the bridechamber, the place of priestly sacrifice. Jesus is the high-priest who, on the Cross, offers the wedding sacrifice of his own flesh and blood, through which God will be united to his people in a new and everlasting covenant (Pitre, Jesus the Bridegroom, 109).

In the first marriage, the first bride, Eve, was created from Adam's side. In the new and everlasting marriage, the new bride, the Church, is created from Jesus' side. Just as Adam fell into a deep sleep so that God can create the Woman from his side, so too Jesus falls into the sleep of death and blood and water flow from his side. "The miraculous flow of blood and water from the side of Jesus is the origin and foundation of the marriage of Christ and the Church" (Pitre, Jesus the Bridegroom, 111). On the Cross, the Church is given two wedding gifts: the living water of the Holy Spirit in Baptism and the life-giving blood of Jesus in the Eucharist. Natural life was given to Eve from the side of Adam; supernatural life is given to the Church through the water and blood from the side of Jesus (Pitre, Jesus the Bridegroom, 112).

The wedding of Jesus and his bride has begun, but is not yet fully complete. At the end of time, we will celebrate the eternal marriage of Jesus and his bride. Right now, Jesus is preparing a dwelling place for his bride in heaven. He is the bridegroom who will return unexpectedly (Matthew 25:1-13) and bring his guests into the joy of the great wedding feast (Pitre, Jesus the Bridegroom, 119). This feast is the wedding supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:6-9). We wait for that day and look forward to that wedding feast in the Eucharist. Even now, then, Jesus the Bridegroom is united to the Church, his bride, in the Eucharist in both body and spirit (Pitre, Jesus the Bridegroom, 146).

We ask God on this day to keep us faithful to the wedding covenant we have entered into with him. Our baptism, our sharing in Christ's death and resurrection, was our entry into this new covenant. We pray that, with his grace, we overcome the sins and faults that hinder us from enjoying the wedding feast of the Lamb. This Eucharist is only a foretaste of that great feast, and strengthens us as we await the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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Jesus the Bridegroom:

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