

Wedding at Cana
2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
(Is 62:1-5; Jn 2:1-11)

Jesus never married in his lifetime. But if you were to ask him whether he was married, he would likely answer with the prophecy of Isaiah: “*As a young man marries a virgin, your Builder shall marry you; and as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride so shall your God rejoice in you*” (Is 62:5). Jesus would say he came for the purpose of marriage, and in fact through many parables he compared the Kingdom of God to a wedding banquet. He is the bridegroom, and the Church is his bride.

The Wedding at Cana is the third event of the Epiphany or “Manifestation” of the Lord. The first epiphany was the revelation of Jesus to the Magi by a heavenly star. The second epiphany was the revelation of Jesus as Messiah by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the testimony of John the Baptist. The third epiphany of Jesus is the revelation of his divinity by means of his own miracles, which begin at Cana when he changes water into wine.

It was Mary who showed the Christ child to the Magi, and it is Mary who presents him to the world at Cana, deciding when and where he will perform his first miracle. Up until now Jesus has done nothing extraordinary to reveal who he is. Except for a few select individuals such as Mary and John the Baptist, no one knows anything about his divine nature. It is by Mary’s initiative that the “hour” of the Lord arrives, the moment when Jesus begins his journey to Calvary.

Mary knows who this man is, the New Adam, and she understands that she is therefore the New Eve, the “Woman” (cf. Jn 2:4). As Eve initiated the fall by directing Adam to act in sin, Mary initiates the Redemption by directing Jesus to begin acting in grace and power. As Adam and Eve brought forth a human race through their marriage, so Jesus and Mary (who represents the Church) bring forth a new human race, reborn children of God through water and the Holy Spirit.

The advent of Jesus is indeed the heavenly wedding banquet. John the Baptist is best man (“groomsman”) who presents the Bride to Jesus (Jn 3:29). The betrothal of the Church is sealed by means of the dowry Jesus bequests in his death on the Cross, and the wedding is consummated when the groom returns from his Father’s house on the last day, now that he has prepared a place for her.

It is therefore fitting that his glory first be manifested at this wedding in the village of Cana, near to Nazareth where he grew up (and not by some other kind of miracle such as healing the sick, raising the dead, expelling demons, or walking on water). Mary understands this deeply, and recognizes the Father’s providence in the situation being faced by her dear friends at their wedding celebration.

All of this mystery is hidden in that brief dialogue which takes place between Jesus and Mary:

The mother of Jesus said to him, *“They have no wine.”*

Jesus said to her, *“Woman, how does your concern affect me?”*
[literally, *“What is this to you and me?”*]

Jesus said to her, *“My hour has not yet come.”*

His mother said to the servers, *“Do whatever he tells you.”*

Understanding the significance of this event at Cana also helps us to understand the significance of marriage becoming one of the seven Sacraments of the Church. The mystery of Cana continues to unfold in every Catholic marriage, which is a “sacrament” (i.e. sign and participatory symbol) of the marriage between Christ the Church.

Every Catholic marriage begins with an ordinary man and woman, dear to Mary and Jesus, who are “invited” to their marriage. Every married couple shares their joy with family and friends by means of a great banquet or reception, which requires much expense and preparation. Every married couple has weaknesses and limitations, and has to face the fact that despite their best efforts, they cannot fully provide what is truly needed for the “celebration.” No human being can fully fulfill another, every human being is marked by sin and imperfection. Every marriage experiences the “wine running out,” as the honeymoon period gives way to chores, work, and the drudgery of raising a family, while also dealing with each others’ selfish will and sinfulness.

The miracle of Cana, which continues to occur in the Sacrament of Matrimony, is not that a church wedding somehow makes for a happier marriage, but that God’s grace works a paradoxical miracle of changing the problems and difficulties (“water”) into an occasion of spiritual richness, when they are brought to him through the intercession of Mary and the Church. The water is changed to wine by the power of the Cross (Jesus’ “hour”). The Cross is the source of grace in the sacrament of Matrimony. The Bride which Jesus takes to himself has to be purified of sin by a painful personal sacrifice (Eph 5:25-27). Likewise, every married couple must find purification in their lives through the painful challenges that come their way.

For so many couples, the crisis of “wine running out” becomes an occasion for divorce, and even remarriage, something prohibited by Jesus (Mt 19), because they fail to understand the Kingdom of God. When they “have no more wine,” this

does not mean it is over, the end. Rather, it is the beginning, the necessary precondition for what the Sacrament of Matrimony truly is: a life lived by faith and trust in God, not one's own power or will. If only married couples prayed the Rosary every day of their married life, daily bringing their situation to the Lord through Mary, in trust and obedience! He will work impossible miracles: the problems themselves will become sources of rich grace, particularly for the "guests" at the wedding, their children, grandchildren, relatives, and friends. Like the headwaiter, everyone will comment about this couple: "they have such a rich love, such a beautiful marriage." And this richness only emerges more fully with time. Like the groom in the Gospel, the couple will not understand why people say this about them.

This is the mystery of the Kingdom of God. Nowhere does Christ's redemptive grace have a more powerful effect in the world than when husband and wife give the water of their lives completely to the Lord for his purposes and not their own; when they do so through trust and obedience, inviting Mary and the Church fully into their lives. Nowhere is Christ's Kingdom more fully revealed than in the Christian family, built upon his love. Even great miracles of healing do not compare to the power of a husband and wife doing their best for their family, with prayer and faith, staying close to God, allowing the grace of their sacrament to work its power.

May all our parishioners draw hope and encouragement from this first miracle of Jesus, which continues to be his most important miracle in the life of his Bride today.