

## 2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME – C (January 16, 2022)

This is such a wonderful gospel—who doesn't enjoy a festive wedding celebration?? Marriage, as we know, is given to us by God himself. And, as Isaiah reminds us in the first reading, the mutual love and gift of self between husband and wife is an image of God's love for us: "...as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so shall your God rejoice in you." Jesus' presence at this wedding certainly reinforces the goodness and the joy of marriage; in fact, the Church teaches that his presence at Cana raised marriage to the dignity and power of a sacrament, 'an [effective] sign of God's presence' (CCC 1613).

And when he changed that water into wine, the celebration and the festivity reached new heights. Remember: Jesus told the servers to fill those six stone jars to the brim, and John tells us that each one held twenty to thirty gallons. That means there was 120 to 180 gallons of new and delicious wine—that's a whole lot of wine! Of course, Jesus isn't in any way encouraging overindulgence or drunkenness, but used wisely, it can heighten the joy and the celebration. Pope Francis has spoken about this Cana wedding: "Water is necessary for life, but wine expresses the abundance of a banquet and the joy of a feast...Just imagine "ending a wedding feast drinking tea..." No, I can't quite imagine that—can you?? Remember also how Isaiah prophesied that the Lord would provide for his people "a feast of rich food and choice wines" (Is. 25:6). Jesus never did anything sparingly or on the cheap; remember also how he multiplied five loaves and two fish into enough to feed 5000 people...and still there were twelve baskets filled with leftovers! Jesus is always ready and willing to give us everything we need, and even more besides.

So Jesus obviously did a great deed at Cana, the first of his public miracles or signs as John calls them, by saving the wedding hosts from the humiliation of running out of wine. But there is another person who plays a key role in this story that has a happy ending—and that is Mary, the mother of Jesus. In fact, John mentions her presence at this wedding even before mentioning Jesus and his disciples. Anyhow: somehow Mary learns of the problem and tells her Son: "They have no wine." And his initial response can seem quite surprising and even disconcerting: "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." In John's gospel, Jesus' 'hour' refers to his suffering, death and resurrection—and that time obviously had not yet come. But still...is Jesus being rude or disrespectful to his Mother? No—addressing her as 'Woman' was very much a sign of respect in those days, unlike today where it has much more of a domineering or disrespectful tone.

In any event, Jesus seems determined not to act on his Mother's request. And Mary's response? She doesn't argue or plead or insist; she simply tells the servers: "Do whatever he tells you." She has total confidence and trust that her Son will do what is necessary. And we know the rest of the story: Jesus has them fill those stone jars, and then give some to the headwaiter who pronounces it the best wine of all—a happy ending indeed!

This is such a beautiful story of the superabundant love of Christ, and it is also such a beautiful illustration of the power of Mary's intercession on our behalf. Again: Jesus at first gives no indication that he was going to do anything about the wine problem, but Mary wasn't deterred. She just directed the servers to do what Jesus said; she knew that her Son, her flesh and blood,

would not let her or the guests down—and he didn't. One of the episodes of "The Chosen" is devoted to the Cana wedding story (first season, fifth episode), and it is so well done. Near its end, while everyone is enjoying this new and best of all wine, Mary is shown looking around in the crowd for Jesus. When she catches his eye, she smiles with great tenderness and mouths the words "thank you" to him, and he simply smiles back with great love at his Mother whose request he simply could not refuse.

Who can doubt the power of Mary's loving prayer for us? That power was on full display at Cana. We can and should, of course, always bring our prayers and needs and concerns directly to God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But sacred scripture also encourages us to pray for one another, to intercede for one another, and so it's the most natural thing in the world to ask others to pray for us and our loved ones. And who better to ask to pray for us than the Woman who conceived and gave birth to our Savior? At Cana she told her Son about the need, she then told the others to do whatever He told them. Likewise, she brings our needs, concerns and fears to her Son, and she tells us the same thing. St. John Paul II said that Cana gives us a first example of Mary's role on our behalf—her role is 'wholly oriented towards Christ' and making known to us his saving power. A genuine devotion, an authentic devotion to Mary is always and necessarily about Jesus and is always and necessarily directed to him—because Mary always directs us back to him. That is her role—she wants nothing more than to lead and direct us back to her Son.

"Do whatever he tells you." These are the very last words that the gospels give us from Mary; what words could possibly be more important for us to hear from Mary than these? Pope Francis says it well in declaring that these words are 'the legacy she hands down to us'. By all means, let's bring our prayers and needs and concerns to Mary and ask her to take them to her Son. And then let's be ready to hear and put into action the words she told those servers: "Do whatever he tells you." We know what Jesus tells us—his words are in the gospels and in the Church that he gave us to carry on his teaching. In those words are the key and the heart of the life of Christian faith and discipleship, of being a follower of Jesus—Mary's Son, and our Savior.