

2ND SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME YEAR C HOMILY 2022

WEDDING AT CANA – FIRST OF JESUS' SIGNS

Jn 2.1-11 Is 62.1-5 1Cor 12.4-11

When I was trying to teach chemistry, doing a DipEd part-time, as curate at Croydon, and secondary school chaplain in 1980, one of my chemistry magic tricks was to turn water into wine into milk, although I certainly wouldn't recommend drinking any of the potions in the process. It was achievable through acid-base indicator (*phenolphthalein, as I recall!*), and then precipitates resulting from metallic ions reacting with sulphates or carbonates to form insoluble metal salts! A good party trick to try and gain interest in chemistry for those not so keen on a fascinating subject, in my opinion! As we know, chemistry is at the heart of the physical world, as everything is composed of atoms and molecules, elements and compounds, and simple and complex reactions.

Enough of science. Now to theology and scripture, as we move to early in John's Gospel, where the first '*sign*' of Jesus is to produce the good wine from the water used for purification. It is significant too, that abundance of wine and fine food are Old Testament metaphors for the divine feast around the table of the Lord. (*This Gospel, unsurprisingly, is often enough chosen for weddings these days.*)

From the profound words at the beginning of John's Gospel, prescribed for Christmas Day (but unwisely, really, the wrong time in pastoral and practical terms!), we have: "***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God***", we move to the start of John Chapter 2: "***There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee***", down to earth reality and a very human story, in terms of the whole village gathering for a marriage, a social occasion for coming together to support and celebrate the happy couple, about whom we know nothing here. The central character engaging with Jesus is his mother Mary, never named in John's Gospel, but who persists in encouraging her son to help with the ongoing festivities, which he does, despite initial reluctance.

For one thing, we can conclude that Jesus approves of enjoyable celebrations of life's significant events, as with this wedding feast, along with his growing group of friends, who are to follow him through the events of the Gospel, on his itinerant mission. The first disciples have moved from John the Baptist to following Jesus, at John's initiative, Andrew and Simon Peter, then Philip and Nathanael. The public focus is not on Jesus, but John's Gospel has him in the background, enabling the party to go on, through his surreptitious intervention. As in the other Gospels, Jesus is not highlighted as a wonderworker, so much as the one in whom to believe, calling to faith as he reveals the power of the God, to whom he responds, bringing a message of Good News, as his public mission begins.

Next thing, they head for Capernaum, a multi-cultural town near the Sea of Galilee, and so Jesus moves on with his faithful followers. In John's Gospel, the call of the apostles follows a different pattern, but the message is the same, the intention of the author being to provide a rationale for faith in Jesus through his words and deeds.

Perhaps the secondary lesson here is the need for persistence, as Mary encourages, if not directs, Jesus to do something about the situation, where there was a real need, in this case, for more wine. Initially reluctant, Jesus responds, as she seems sure that he will, and so the party goes on. They knew how to celebrate well in those days. It wasn't just all over in a day, but the village people went on for the week, it seems!

There are priorities reflected here for family, faith and friendship, with an engagement with new companions along the way, as Jesus' mission continues, amid the normal occasions of life and work. It could be presumed that the apostles continued their normal occupations in the background, even though none of the Gospels highlight this, being more focussed on the person and message of Jesus, who walks with them, and now us, as we continue our journey of life as faithful disciples.

The second reading warrants a word today also, as Paul encourages Corinthians to use their gifts appropriately in responding to the Spirit enlivening and guiding the building up of Christian community in its wonderful diversity of characters, working together to develop the kingdom of justice, love and peace, here but not yet

fully, as proclaimed by Jesus. Once again, Paul is quite practical here in his encouragement, or even directions, to contribute, each in our own way, recognizing our individual role in it all.

And I conclude with Claude Mostowik's take on today's Gospel: *"As we enter into a new church year, Mary urges us to believe that the time is now for us to believe that God's reign can be palpable in our midst as we listen to the promptings of the Spirit. The time has come for the Church to become genuinely synodal, appreciating and listening to the voice of each of her members, especially those on the margins. This the shared journey, the pilgrimage, the 'synodal path' based on the conviction that the Spirit is given to all in the Church and working beyond it. The hour has come for all of us to be co-workers with God and to listen to the Gospel. The time has come to look at Christ and **do whatever he tells us.**"* So Mary says to the obedient and responsive servants in today's Gospel, as should we, with a discerning conscience, heart and mind.

And so we move forward with this conviction, as we face all of the uncertainties of 2022, from dealing with COVID restrictions and fears, to making the most of our own opportunities to live the Gospel in the situations in which we find ourselves.

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