

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (C): God gives us the best, and so we are!

Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 96:1-2,2-3,7-8,9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; John 2:1-11

Dear family and friends of CCST,

The miracle at the wedding in Cana is a fascinating story where the best wine in the world is ever produced instantly!

The miracle happens when the wedding party runs out of wine, which is an embarrassment to the host family. Mary must have been informed or may have noticed the need, so she interceded on their behalf and told Jesus, "they have no wine" (Jn 2:3). It's a profound illustration of her maternal care, and she knew the obedience and the love of her Son. Although it was not yet the time to reveal Jesus' glory, Mary anticipates that Jesús will do something, but how it will happen, it's up to Jesus. It is indicative of her advice to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5). She advised them to be attentive to what Jesus will command on them.

The command of Jesus may be ridiculous initially because the servers have to fill the six stone jars with water which are not for drinking but used for ceremonial washing. But they did follow him anyway. Each stone jar holds twenty to thirty gallons of water. Our Lord Jesus blessed them, and amazingly, the shortage turned into an abundance. It miraculously produced around one hundred seventy-five gallons of the best wine. It is roughly about eight hundred seventy-five hundred bottles of wine, more than enough for the whole week's celebration. Only Mary and the servers knew about it, and the guests would not have noticed it, but the served wine was excellent to what they previously drank. The best wine is served first and the inferior one last, for the already drunk guests may no longer notice the difference. But the served wine is of superior taste, and everyone was surprised, so it intensified the joy. It was not only an increase in quantity; it transformed the quality. It's the best wine ever! St. John tells us that Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs at Cana (cf Jn 2:11). The beginning of the best of everything is happening!

The miracle is the sign of God's new covenant, the new wedding between God and his people. Symbolically, God is now the host of the wedding celebration. He provides a tremendous amount of wine superior to any wine the world can offer. It signifies God's joy to marry us, to make us into his family. Prophet Isaiah speaks on this in our first reading: "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 is the "I love you" of the Father to humanity. As St. John would put it, "For God so love the world that gives his only Son so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). It is a covenant of love sealed by the blood of the Son, himself, through his passion and death on the cross. After his resurrection, this union ushers an outpouring of graces – the grace of forgiveness, the Holy Eucharist, the Sacraments, Priesthood, our adoption as children of God. These are freely given without merit on our part but compel those who accept and believe in responding with a life of conversion, which is the starting point and ongoing reality of Christian life.

(I remember someone complaining that the priest always talks about sin and conversion in his homily. The person refused to listen to this message. She prefers to listen to the love of God has for us, which is very true, and I agreed, but I reminded her that talking about sin and conversion does not diminish the message for humbly owning one's sins makes it clear all the more our need for God's saving love. I said to check her office drawer, closet, or car compartment. In the beginning, they are clean and orderly. But after sometimes they are cluttered by all kinds of things. It also happens in our soul.)

Conversion is challenging but necessary. It is painfully demanding but often healing because Jesus wants us to give up to him what is bad or evil in us. But if we do, something best and beautiful comes out from it, for Jesus desires the inherent goodness or best to shine forth from us. We ritualize this when we humbly acknowledge our sins at the start of the Holy Mass. In my estimation, to solve the many problems of the world starts with our conversion so that God's power can use the gifts he bestowed on us – our talents, time, and treasures. St. Paul speaks some of these gifts of the spirit -- wisdom, knowledge, faith, mighty deeds, healing, prophecy, discernment, varieties, and interpretation of tongues (cf. 1 Cor 12:8-11). Conversion helps unleash the power of the gifts of the spirit intended to build the Body of Christ and transform the world. Our talent, time, treasures are the ordinary

waters that Jesus can use to effect change to others. No matter how small or inconsequential we think they may be, God can make them significant when they are offered with great love. As St. Theresa of Calcutta would say, "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."

This is beautiful! But we also have to realize that sometimes we experience "running out of wines." We experience dead ends and moments of insufficiency. We do not only run out of supply; we also run out of goodness and the will to continue. More often than not, it is because of failures, discouragement, misunderstanding, or being taken for granted, and few people around us who drain our patience, wear out our good intention and exhaust us emotionally. Who will be our refuge when it happens? Our refuge is our Blessed Mother Mary, for she is our ally. It is appropriate to pay attention to her advice, and her advice is "do whatever he tells you." It presupposes daily prayer and personal self-examination to grow in docility or receptiveness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Brothers and sisters, just as our Lord Jesus offers the greatest good and continues to sacrifice himself to us in the Holy Eucharist, the quality of our response to him is our witness that his love transforms us. God gives us the best. Isn't it fitting also we offer our best?

God bless you.

Fr. Manny Hewe