

**ECHOING GOD'S WORD
IN THE
CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY
Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
January 19, 2025**

SCRIPTURES:

Isaiah 62:1-5	God weds his people as a young man marries a virgin.
1 Corinthians 12:4-11	The Holy Spirit is the source of all gifts in the Church.
John 2:1-12	The Age of the Messiah has come: Wine flows in abundance!
Psalms 96:1-3,7-10	Praise God for His gracious love.

Isaiah:

Today we are much more restrained than was the prophet Isaiah in the use of symbols to describe our relationship with God. He was scandalously bold; he was outrageous in using metaphors from sexuality and from married life to illustrate how God will be deeply involved and forever committed to his people. We are much more puritanical. The language of the marriage bed did not seem inappropriate at all to Isaiah. Such was the fondness God had for the people of Israel now that they had been purified by the adversity of Exile. Now back in the sacred land of the promise made to Abraham, the people enjoy a new depth of love from their God. As a young man marries a virgin, so will the Lord marry his people! Let the imagery run on and on.

1 Corinthians:

Whatever spiritual energies reside in the community, all these come from God who grants them to whomever he wills. We can take no personal credit for the gifts that the Lord gives. They are gifts from him for the benefit of the Church which is the body of Christ. In the theology of Paul, God endows the Church with blessings precisely because the Church is the body of Christ. God loves and blesses his Son in his human and community dimension. God blesses Christ; God blesses the body of Christ. The only reason we are blessed is that we have been called into the body of Christ.

Acts:

It is as if the Church cannot stop proclaiming the “epiphanies” of the Lord. There was an ancient custom of proclaiming three epiphanies after the Nativity of the Son of God: 1. The visit of the Magi. 2. The baptism of the Lord. 3. The wedding feast of Cana. Three times, God shows his power to his people. Before launching out into the public ministry and teaching of Jesus in the Sundays of ordinary time, the Church wants to hear from John one more time that God has revealed his Son in our midst.

Mary has been given great authority here as she calls Jesus to perform this first miracle.

Since she is the mother of the Church, we need to see a similar authority vested in the Church itself. We, too, as a community, can call upon Jesus when the world is in need. We can go to Jesus and say: “The world needs you right now!” But the Church, like Mary, needs to remind itself and the world for whom it intercedes: “Do whatever he tells you.”

Do we fully appreciate how much wine was made that day? Those water jars add up to 180 gallons: if there were 100 guests, each would now have an additional 30 eight-ounce glasses of new wine after the original supply had run out! Obviously, the point here is on the abundance of God’s blessing for those whom he loves. This had to be the age of the Messiah, finally, for such bounty to flow for the sake of God’s people.

“Woman, how does this concern of yours involve me?” Gentle lady, is your business really in line with my purposes? It turns out that the two have an identical purpose. Otherwise, he would not have responded to her request. The magnanimity of his response, the superabundance of wine, tells us something about the identity of purpose between the two of them. Mary and Jesus have only one goal: to mediate the overwhelming generosity of God toward his people.

One hundred twenty gallons of the best wine in the world was available at the end of this wedding in Cana! Jesus must have considered the sacredness of this marriage to be worth his business. He wanted to emphasize the sanctity of marriage by making so much wine available. Six stone water jars, each containing about 20 gallons, were there. “Fill them up with water,” he said! And then there was wine! The very best of wine!

One need not be married to experience the love of God. Jesus Christ is the center of life for married couples and for single people. The 613 precepts of the law of Moses do not apply where Jesus Christ is present. His holiness is shared with everyone who knows him and loves him. He is the source of holiness for all people. The wine is available for everyone who goes to the wedding feast to which Christ has called us. *Jesus Christ is the wine!*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What special dimension of God’s revelation do you hear when the Scriptures speak of God inviting us to the wedding? How do you feel about the abundance of food and drink in God’s kingdom?
2. Relate the Church’s celebration of the Eucharist, day after day, everywhere on earth, to the generosity of God toward his people. We have holy Communion every day and not once a month like the churches of the Reformation. God is generous to us!
3. In what ways could your parish more effectively communicate the overarching bounty of God in its weekend celebrations of the Eucharist? Do the signs and symbols speak as loudly as they could?
4. Comment on the feeding of the hungry by agencies of the Church in our times. Do you see this ministry as a manifestation of God’s generosity? Do soup kitchens and food banks have any connection with the Wedding of Cana scene?

PRAYER

“Give us this day our daily bread”

SUGGESTION FOR CHRISTIAN ACTION

Let your family (group, class) become an organism of intercession and praise before God as you give thanks for the many blessings that God has bestowed upon the world. Make a list of the many ways in which God provides for his people in this world. Read your list aloud. After each item, let the group say:

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

“Give us this day our daily bread”

And wine, too!

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

The Gospel account of the first “sign” performed by Jesus at the Wedding Feast of Cana provides an opportunity for a few thoughts concerning marriage in the Catholic Church.

Over the centuries, the Church has developed its teaching concerning Christian marriage as a result of the evolution taking place in the broader culture. From its New Testament heritage, the Church has always considered marriage to be a sacred institution, ordained by God for the fulfillment of divine purposes in society. St. Paul saw marriage as a most appropriate image to convey his teaching about the union of Christ with the Church. Christ is the bridegroom. The Church is the bride. Bride and groom cannot be separated. So, the Church cannot be separated from Christ.

Whereas marriage was always seen as sacred, it was only gradually that the institutional Church came to regulate the celebration of weddings. From its Jewish roots, the Christian community continued to see weddings as essentially the business of families. From Roman law, the Church, for many years, simply assumed that civil law would deal with the need for protective legislation and rules concerning the personal and social requirements for marriage. When civil society could no longer effectively provide this kind of legislation, the Church stepped in as the only effective authority so that the institution of marriage would be protected, so that persons and the social order itself would be protected. Children had to be protected. Wives had to be protected from the greed of their husbands. So, the Church began to pass laws concerning marriage.

Still, today, the Church considers marriage to be a natural right not to be denied anyone unless there is an urgent and compelling reason for restrictions and reservations. There is a minimum age for marriage: 15 for women and 17 for men. (Of course, state regulations also control the age requirement.) If a person has been married before, that person must be free to marry, either by the death of a previous spouse or by an annulment.

Civil divorce does not mean anything concerning Catholic marriages. A Catholic has to have been married in the presence of a duly authorized priest or deacon. Other persons can be married by a

justice of the peace or by a minister. These marriages are binding for these people as far as the Catholic Church is concerned.

See **The Catechism** #1601 and following.

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