

In Nomine Jesu

Prayer Upon Entering Church: Almighty and eternal God, Governor of all things in heaven and on earth, mercifully hear the prayers of Your People, and grant us Your Peace in our days; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Text

John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. ³When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

⁶Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. ⁹When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom ¹⁰and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." ¹¹This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

The Homily

The Bottomless Glass

In the 1960's Miss Peggy Lee asked in her song: "Is that all there is?" I don't believe there is anyone within earshot today who doesn't recognize the creeping chill of that feeling: "there should have been more to it all." And when this feeling assails us, we do as Wilma Flintstone in that 1960's cartoon: we run

out the door yelling “Charge it!” – we drink to excess – we pop a pill – we grab for all the gusto and adventure we can get – we go to the latest guru of the moment. Even in moments of apparent victory – there lies – close under the surface – the ceaseless cravings of the human heart.

Today, we discover Jesus at a wedding – where the wine has run out. We can imagine the dismayed host saying: “Is that all there is?” The marriage ceremony in Cana of Galilee in Biblical times – was not at all like a Lutheran wedding today. A wedding party in small town Palestine would have been – hands down – **the event** – of the year – for most of the participants.

People looked forward to a marriage celebration for months. The partying went on for seven days. Rabbis abandoned their fasts – and students their studies. Everyone brought presents – and in return – the host was expected to keep his guests well supplied – with food – drink – music – and merrymaking. It was therefore more than a minor disappointment to have the wine run out. It was a catastrophe.

Jesus’ mother comes to Him and reports: *“They’re out of wine.”* (v. 3) Now, there are a lot of things going on here – on a lot of different levels. Jesus replies to His mother: *“Woman, why did you come to Me?”* (v.4) The fact is – that Jesus is declaring His independence. He isn’t rude to His mother – but in His refusal to call her mother – He sets a distance between her and Himself.

Jesus lives – not according to human arrangements – but according to His Father’s will. He must listen to another Voice – and follow the beat of a different drummer. The time of His mother’s authority over Him is over. Notice St. Mary’s response: If her feelings are hurt – and I am quite sure they were – she doesn’t let that get in the way.

She is – as always – the model of the true believer. She insists on – **nothing**. She suggests – **nothing**. She demands –

nothing. But St. Mary is not passive. Notice how she responds. Even though she has no idea what Jesus might do – she makes a space for Him to act. She speaks to the servants, saying: “*Just do whatever He tells you.*” (v. 5)

On the surface – no doubt – everything looked fabulous. Jewish families of Jesus’ time – like families of every time – would have spared no expense. But imagine you’re at a wedding – and they run out! As you approach the head of the line – the last slice of filet mignon is being served – the last glass of champagne is poured. And you say: “Is that all there is? There should have been more.”

There’s something else wrong at this wedding in Cana. There are all those stone water pots standing by for you to stub your toes on. Do you know why they were there? They were there for the Jewish rite of purification. They are a reminder – that **all is not well** – and there is a need greater than that of a further supply of wine. Water from them is used for the washing away of sin. It is used – but **it doesn’t work!**

It is tasteless – odorless – colorless – and joyless – and it doesn’t take away their sin. As it says in Hebrews: “*Moses’ teachings can never make those who worship perfect. Instead, they reminded people of their sins.*” (Heb 10:1-3) We may chase after women – or men – or four star restaurants – or the perfectly buffed body (something I will never attain!) – or perfectly coiffed hair – or the ultimate religious experience – but there is no one of us who doesn’t know the fear of the news that comes at last: “There isn’t any more.” And – we don’t **at all** like the idea of life coming to an end.

“*Do whatever He tells you*” – says St. Mary to the servers. Jesus says: “*Fill the jars with water.*” (vv. 5-6) This is a big order. Each jar held 18 to 27 gallons. And there were six of these stone monsters. At a minimum then – we are talking about 108 gallons. Most scholars suggest at least 125 or 130 gallons. If there are four quarts to a gallon – and each quart

yields five or six glasses – that’s a minimum of 3000 glasses of wine.

The servants – trusting Jesus – haul the huge amount of water – and fill the jars. Jesus says: *“Pour some and take it to the person in charge.”* (v.8) Now, St. John is a great story teller. The next thing we hear – is the wine steward’s exuberant shout to the host – congratulating him: *“Everyone serves the best wine first. When people are drunk – the host serves the cheap wine. But you have saved the best wine for now.”* (v. 10)

What has Jesus done? 3000 glasses – of the finest vintage – 600 bottles of Dom Perignon – at \$175 a bottle - \$105,000 worth of champagne – for one little wedding party – in a backwater village – in the middle of nowhere! That’s what Jesus has done! What does this mean? Jesus would later say: *“I came so that My sheep will have life – the abundant life – and so that they will have everything they need.”* (Jn 10:10) Jesus gives Himself. He is the Bread of Life – the Light of the world – the true Vine – the Good Shepherd – the Resurrection and the Life.

Every Jew in Jesus’ time knew that the wedding feast – throughout the Hebrew Bible – was the primary image of salvation – the banquet of redemption in the Kingdom of God. And so when Jesus – **at a wedding** – poured out more good wine that anyone had ever seen or thought of – those who had eyes to see and ears to hear – recognized that the future blessings of the Heavenly Kingdom had become **present – right now** – in the miracle of Jesus.

St. John says: *“Cana in Galilee was **the place** where Jesus began to perform miracles. He made His glory public there – and His disciples believed in Him.”* (v. 11) Jesus of Nazareth sees our predicament. **The wine has run out** – and we are still in our sins. He sees us – He sees our whole society – He sees the whole world on this planet – full of disease – and violence – and cruelty – and death – afflicted with conditions

that religious rituals of the Old Testament have never been able to improve!

The Master I serve sees us – He loves us – and He has come to pour out His Life for us. The message of the Christ-mass was that the Son of God is born among us. The message of Epiphany – is that the Son of God is powerful to save. Whenever you find yourself asking: “Is that all there is?” – remember – No – **it is not all!**

The promise of Jesus doesn't refer only to some far-off day in the future. He gives His Life to us now – not a life of partying and drinking – and conspicuous consumption – ending in emptiness – but a life of service – service to others – and to God's suffering world – a life that is not built on chasing dreams and fantasies – but a life **being built** by the Holy Spirit – into a fellowship of love – that gathers even now – at the Lord's Table for the Feast of Victory!

The Only-Begotten – is the One – the **only One** – who is able to give purification – **the Only One** who is able to wipe away regret forever – **the Only One** in whose Name we find ourselves redeemed – restored – forgiven – and brought into an eternal future – where there will be no need to search for dreams and fantasies – because the dream of all humanity is summed up – in the Cross – and in the Resurrection – of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He goes to prepare a place for us – at His own unending Banquet – and there – the **wine never runs out!** Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds + in Christ Jesus. Amen.

SOLI DEO GLORIA!