

It is more profitable to know Jesus than to know about Him.

Weekly Edition – June 9, 2017
Gospel According to St. John – First Year

The Gospel of John: The Wedding at Cana (Part Two)

2 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

⁴ "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

⁸ Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, ⁹ and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰ and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

¹¹ What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

¹² After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

The Gospel of St. John

Part I

- Prologue 1:1-14
- First Year 1:15 – 2:22
- Second Year 2:23 – 6:71
- Third Year 7:1 – 12:50

Part II

- The Last Discourse 13:1 – 17:26
- The Arrest and Trial 18:1 – 19:16
- Death and Resurrection 19:16 (b) – 21:25

Entering into Scripture: A Meditation on the Wedding Feast

The day of joyous celebration is upon us. It seems the whole village beats in anticipation, as family and friends gather first around the bride and then around the groom in anticipation to what is ahead! It is the day of consummation. The contract between the groom and the father-of-the-bride had been entered into long ago, before she was of age. Since then the dowry has been raised. And now, today, nearly three years later - the day of consummation; the day of celebration!

I am a stranger to this family, invited because I am the friend of a friend, though you might properly say, I am the friend of the son, whose mother is a friend of the two families - both the bride's and the groom's. Yet even as a welcomed stranger I am caught-up in the joy and anticipation of this wedding day.

When we arrive at the home of the groom, a gathering crowd is already formed. There is a buzz of joyous laughter in the air. Jesus introduces me to some people and it is not long before me and my companions are warmly and openly accepted as part of this extended family. Before long the groom emerges from his chamber and makes his way to the home of the bride, followed by this cheerful throng of friends and family. The two families mingle outside while husband and wife are together for the first time, consummating the marriage contract with marital relations.

Sometime later, a cheer rings out as the bride and groom emerge from their wedding chamber. Oh, the longing, the anticipation, the yearning desire which had been quietly nurtured in the years

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leading up to this day - bride and groom pining for one another! The two emerge not as he and she, but as one! This moment of consummation is the sacred time they have so patiently awaited. But now, on to celebration!

At once the party begins. Wine flows. Caterers scurry with trays of food. The harp and lyre breakout in song and those gathered erupt into a joyous festival of dancing and merriment. I am drawn into the celebration and lose track, not only of time - but also of my companions.

Later into the evening, I can scarcely tell you how much time has passed, it occurs to me that it has been some time since I have seen Jesus or my other friends. I focus in on the faces as I scan this happy throng, looking to see where Jesus is so I might join Him and the others. It is an intoxicating brew of laughter and voices and singing and music and dancing - a party in full swing, and I have trouble locating my friend. So I begin to weave my way through this joyous festival scanning for Jesus.

I find Him at last, near the catering station, and as soon as He sees me He smiles and motions for me to join Him. I approach and as I make my way into His circle, Jesus' mother comes up beside Him. She has an air of urgency about her and her face conveys concern - not panic so as to raise alarm, but a clear expression of concern which is in stark contrast to the merry-making all around. She is a woman on a mission. "They are out of wine," she says.

I am aghast at the thought. Oh, the humiliation. Oh, the shame to come down upon these newlyweds. How can this be? This party is just getting started, though it has been raging for hours. "How did this happen?" I think to myself. Was it poor planning? Was the wine stock insufficient for the size of the crowd? Or is the crowd larger than the bride and the groom expected - after all, I am an interloper here. Or have the guests simply been pounding down libations in quantities not expected? No matter which, to end this celebration now would be

premature - I might even say a catastrophe for them - these newlyweds.

"What has that to do with Me?" Jesus replies to His mother. Un-phased, she turns to the servants standing nearby and simply offers this instruction: "Do whatever He tells you," pointing at her son. She turns and disappears into the crowd.

My normally active mind goes blank. I am still stuck on that poor couple and how quickly their day of joy has been turned into a day of humiliation and embarrassment. I feel so deeply for this couple who I have yet to meet. So in my distress it does not occur to me to consider what Mary intends for Jesus to do about this impending disaster. Is there some wine cache at their home we don't know about? We certainly can't go to market at this late hour and get more. Besides, even if we could, where would we get sufficient money to acquire enough such that each among this throng could have a single glass? These are the things I might normally consider, but do not. I am wallowing in pity for these two who I do not know. I just feel so badly for them.

Behind the catering station are six large jars - the kind used for washing. Each contains 20 to 30 gallons. They have been there all along, but I didn't take notice of them until Jesus points to them and asks the servants to fill them with water. There are six or seven servants nearby, maybe more. At once they ferry back and forth from a nearby well, filling the jars with water.

Jesus, in the meantime, turns back to the small circle of friends and resumes the conversation: "Now, you were saying....?" And one of the others takes up the story he had been previously recounting. As for me, I don't listen to his words. My joyous heart has turned sad as I anticipate the premature realization of all these party-goers that the wine is gone. No spirits - no party.

I am awakened from my sulking when one of the servants taps Jesus on His arm to let Him know that they have finished filling the jars. Jesus tells him to draw some of it out and take it to the wine master. "That's odd," I think to myself. But

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just then, I am pulled away by another friend who wants to introduce me to the bride and groom. I excuse myself and make my way into the commotion of the festival, following my companion as he weaves through the crowd. As we step to the place where the bride and groom are standing, the wine steward steps ahead of us and moves right in front of the groom. He announces, "Most people serve the good wine first, and bring out the cheap wine when their guests are drunk - but you - you saved the best for last!"

From the astonished expression on the groom's face I could tell he had no idea what was going on. His expression matched my own sense of bewilderment and dumbfoundedness. What wine? There is no more wine! We are out of wine. I heard Mary say so. And those jars - they were filled with water. I watched them being filled. I watched the servants draw from them. But this man, this wine steward insists on it. Not only is there more wine - it is the best wine served all night!

My mind traces over the events of the evening. The party. The joy. The music. The celebration. Mary's concerned plea. The jars. The servants ferrying back and forth from the well. Jesus telling them to draw some out and take it to the wine master. Now this. And Jesus was just so nonchalant about it all.

Just yesterday John the Baptist pointed out Jesus as He passed by and said He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Two of us who had been followers of John left him

immediately to join up with Jesus, and He invited us to stay with Him. But this! Did I really just see what I think I saw?

The party continues well into the night with those gathered scarcely aware of the disaster that had been averted. As for me, I am no longer in the partying mood. I have no paradigm to explain what I just witnessed.

As I greet the groom and offer my congratulations, I am not really present. My mind is elsewhere. It strikes me that the groom is unaware of what just happened, as is my companion, the one who called me away from the catering station and jars of water to introduce me to the man of the hour. We exchange greetings, me doing my best to offer sincere and heartfelt congratulations. Then, still reeling, I walk away to an unoccupied corner to be alone and process.

It is here that Jesus finds me an hour or so later. "Hello," He greets me. I return the greeting, uncertain of what else to say. So many things go through my mind. So many questions. So many doubts. With the warmth of a concerned mother He asks me if I am okay. I tell Him I am fine. "Believe, and do not doubt, and you will see greater things than this," He tells me. Then He squeezes my arm in affection, turns, and rejoins the party, still in full swing. Still speechless, I remain alone for a while longer, but the allure of the party becomes too great. So I stand up, shake off my bewilderment, and step into the merriment of the party so I can sample some of that wine for myself.

(Con't from last week) **Reflection 6: Surprising Vocations**

How gracious and good, how generous and loving that God the Father would use the person of Mary, Your mother, to announce to You that the time of Your public ministry is at hand. Given the intimacy between You and the Father, we might have assumed that You would learn that Your time was at hand by means of Your prayer life in the Father. But here we are surprised - it is Your mother who breaks the news to You! In this we see the

super-abundant generosity of God the Father, who gives us each significant vocations in this life, even in things as mundane as informing You that the bride and groom had run out of wine! In this I see every act of service, both large and small, is pleasing to You and brings glory to Your Holy Name. I am so grateful that You give us meaningful work, and in our work we somehow participate with You in Your life and work of redemption.

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Reflection 7: Mystery of the Third Day

According to the timeline of John's gospel, the wedding in Cana took place on the third day following Your baptism, when the Holy Spirit came down on You as a dove. In it we are reminded of Your Covenant promise to mankind. We are reminded of the consummation of that covenant upon the Cross. We are reminded of the celebration of the Eucharistic feast – Your life and resurrection. Covenant. Consummation. Celebration. This water

Reflection 8: Focus on the Family

John lays out his timeline of this opening week of Your public ministry clearly, and by it we observe that this wedding in Cana takes place on the seventh day. Seven symbolizes completion and we are not to miss the connection between the idea of completion and this wedding. The Trinity is expressed as a family relationship of Your Father, You and the Holy Spirit. And this bride and groom represent all families. By their wedding day

Reflection 9: Covenants: Old and New

Nearby stood six stone jars. The water in these jars was used for ceremonial cleansing – the Jewish purification prescribed by Moses in the Law. There are six, not five nor seven. The number seven represents completion, and the Mosaic law, which pointed the way toward salvation, could not deliver it. Instead Your Law prepared the way and led mankind close – even as close as six of seven. Jewish purification represented taking something away – a temporary washing away of faults and impurities that would once again return. Out of these jars, filled to the brim with water by Your servants,

Reflection 10: A Gift of Wedding Wine

Jesus, my Lord and my Friend, I praise You. Here in John's Gospel is a depiction of a wedding with wine. The scene draws our eyes toward the wedding celebration itself – a party – and the extraordinary quality of the wine You made from water-filled jars. Yet if we linger here, we miss the greatest wedding gift ever presented – the gift of Yourself – for You are the true wine! Only a handful of these wedding guests will be with You three years later, in the upper room. There You will take a cup of wine and announce to them "This cup is the new covenant in

changed to wine is a precursor to the third day that is to come when You rise to give new life to the world. This is the new wine which we drink in celebration of the life You give to each of us. No wine is better than this wine, and no other wine can offer these benefits! I thank You and praise You for the new wine of salvation for me and all of Your creation.

celebration, You illuminate family life as the epicenter of sacrificial love. Love finds its completion and highest expression in family life – both the family unit here and now, and the larger family of believers who are adopted into Your eternal family by faith. I thank You for the sacrament of marriage and the gift of family. Help me to live ever more fully into sacrificial love with my wife and my family.

comes the new wine of the new covenant of faith in You – "that we might have life, and have it to the fullest!" Here at the wedding in Cana we see the first buds of this new Eastertide – the one spoken of by Ezekiel when he prophesied, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." Out of the stone jars of the Old Testament, the sweet wine of the New Testament flows. I thank You that my heart of stone has become a heart of flesh through which the sweet wine of Your love and grace flow without ceasing!

My blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me." Even though those gathered will have to wait for Your passion to usher in the gift of the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of freedom and of life – yet now on this festive occasion of the wedding in Cana the new wine of life in You is released in mystery – the joy of a wedding, an unlimited number of guests, and the choicest of fine wine for everyone. Yet only those who listened to You and obeyed – Your servants and friends – know where this wine comes from!

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