

***"His Very Best"***

Wedding celebrations are fun, you get to see the bride and groom, the frivolity and joy that takes place with the beginning of a new relationship. They are drastically different today than they were in the first century. You see - wedding celebrations in first century Israel began on a Monday, and would continue for seven days. The guests ate, reclining on floor mats, eating large quantities of food and drinking a whole lot of wine. It was a party with what might seem like non-stop dancing and fun. In today's Holy Gospel, we come to a situation the hosts ran out of wine, causing them great embarrassment. It just shouldn't happen that way! Please open your Pew Bibles to page 1649, John chapter 2. "*On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.*" (John 2:1-2) The third day being the third day after the Sabbath – Saturday – which would be Monday.

The wedding itself probably would have involved the whole village, and as we read, there were people from neighboring ones too; which is why Mary, her Son and his friends were invited to the celebration. We are not told who the bride and groom were because it is not important for us to know. Running out of wine was not only inconvenient, but it would be a total social disaster and a disgrace. It would have been as if at our annual meeting next week that we ran out of chicken! You know that is NOT going to happen. That family would have to live with the shame of it for a long time to come; I would venture to say that the bride and groom might see it as bringing misfortune on their married life. Throughout the Gospels after this event Jesus will address other kinds of problems and needs, but here we are witnessing the true compassion of our Savior Jesus, a compassion which comes where people are in need and Jesus deals with that need in an unexpected way. The transformation from water to wine signifies the effect that Jesus can have, can still have today, on people's lives. We know, through Jesus' life that He came that believers might have life in all its fullness and abundance. (John 10:10)

With the custom of the wedding lasting seven days – can you just imagine the huge amounts of food and wine that were being consumed? There was concern for the hosts – that running out of wine would be a “black eye” upon them. How would they be able to show their face in the community again? That is why Mary, Jesus' mother, asks for, and I get the sense that she insisted on His help. You know how mothers can be. She insists and is not going to let Him away without helping. Jesus tells her in John 2:4 "*Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."*"

Mary, Jesus' mother knows better than to argue with God, she simply tells the servants "*Do whatever He tells you.*" (John 2:5) She knows that His power is going to be demonstrated; she doesn't know how or why, and I think it is interesting for us to know that as Jesus tells them to go and fill the water jars, He doesn't touch these jars - that is the power that He has! Jesus exhibits two things here in this Gospel reading: one and most importantly, is obedience to His

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mother's wishes. He was a good Jewish boy, you don't cross a Jewish "Momma!" You don't cross Momma! There is an old saying "If Momma ain't happy – ain't nobody happy!" Number two is compassion for people in need. What happens next is evidence of both.

Let's look at verses 6-10 "*Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.*" "*Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.*" "*Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."* *They did so,*" "*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*" "*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."*" (John 2:6-10)

The transformation from water to wine shows us the effect that Jesus can have (and still has today) on people's lives. Mary's faith and the obedience of the servants allow us to see the faith that is necessary for miracles and transformations to take place in our own lives. There is an old saying: 'in order to receive a miracle – you have to expect a miracle.'

Verse 11 gives us more: "*This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.*" (John 2:11) They put their faith in Him, they had seen that this was a Man who not only walked the walk, but He walked the talk. What He said – He did!

There is a moment of hesitation after Mary's impassioned plea to her Son, Jesus. During that very brief moment Mary looks into her son's face and sees a decidedly different man than the one who has lived with her and who she cared for the last thirty years. Let us just look back at what has happened to Jesus: if you recall, last week was the Baptism of Jesus. After Jesus was baptized, near Jericho, He went into the wilderness and was confronted by who, by Satan, for forty days and forty nights. He did not sin, He did not fall into the devil's temptations. After that, He returned to the Galilee region and started to call His disciples. Then He returned to Nazareth, His hometown, and as we read today He was invited to a wedding feast. The man that Mary looked at bears chiseled sculpting from his forty days in the wilderness, after His Baptism in the Jordan. He is leaner now, more serious, and much more intense. Jesus hesitates because He knows that if He meets this need by "supernatural means," His life will never be the same. No, after this one wedding, the small-town seclusion of His life would be behind Him forever. Everyone would want a piece of Him – for Him to heal them. For the next three and a half years, His only time alone to Himself would be moments that He would get away in an olive grove before dawn or brief moments of quiet that He could steal away on a barren hillside after dark. Fellowship with His Father would come only at the expense of His sleep, because the needs of the people were so great!

I am quite sure Jesus thought about the embarrassment the parents of the bride and this couple would suffer, and that it would be no way to start a honeymoon, let alone a new life together in

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that community. You see when people got married, they didn't build a house or go move away, but they built onto the father's house. If you remember the night before Jesus died – what did He say to His disciples? *"I go to prepare a place for you."* *"My Father's house has many rooms."* (John 14:2) This was because you would build on to the house, and they still do that to this day. These people would know – that they would build on, and so the couple couldn't escape. They needed help. Jesus was compassionate and so without a word from His lips, without a touch from His hand, Jesus simply wills the water to become wine.

The way Jesus revealed His glory—with a quiet miracle, with no fanfare, but just the mighty hand of God working silently behind the scenes in an hour of need. The purpose of this miracle was performed not to quench His own thirst, but to satisfy the needs of others. I must say that I was impressed that Jesus didn't just make a standard type of wine – but He gave them the very best. Listen to these words from the master of the banquet who said the to the bridegroom, *"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."* (John 2:10) This reveals not only the benevolence of Jesus and His compassion, but His desire for us to have nothing less than His very best.

I want to suggest to you, and you may never have heard this before, that there is something more than just water being transformed into wine. Let's look at what makes wine – wine: wine is grape juice unless it is aged. The wine of this miracle has no past to be aged and in a sense is being given a new past. Think about this. If God can give a new past where there was no past – then He can remove a past where there was one. I have said many times that there is no sin that cannot be covered by the blood of Jesus. There is not sin that if you give it to Him that cannot be forgiven. God brought time into existence and God can bring it out of existence. If He can wipe out a past – think of what He can do to our sins when we seek His forgiveness. It is not that He forgets our sins – but He makes it as though they never happened. He is the Master of time – and He can take water and turn it into wine – without any aging – He has done something with time. If He can wipe out the past there and give it an aging, then He can take our slate, our sins, which Satan loves to remind us about, but you need to forget them if you have given them, to Jesus. He doesn't forget them as if they never happened at all! That is what is going on here – Jesus is revealing the richness, love and character of a God who gives His love, a new life to those who seek Him and gives them His very best.

The apostles being there and witnessing the glory of God must have greatly increased all of these disciples' faith. Can you just imagine them watching this take place? How amazing it is that they would see so much more in the next three years. This was, as John said, the first recorded miracle by Jesus. I pray that this miracle would touch each of our hearts today, seeing that Our Lord knows our needs, and awaits our seeking His glory and mercy. Remember – Jesus always gives His very best – even to the cross!