

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)  
(Isaiah 62:1-5 / John 2:1-11)  
17.01.2016  
Cana

Dear brothers and sisters,

The wedding at Cana is a turning point in the life of Jesus. With the Adoration of the Magi and the Baptism of the Lord, the wedding at Cana is the third sign retained by the Liturgy to illustrate the Epiphany of the Word of God made flesh, the manifestation of the Son of God to the whole world. In this perspective, the wedding at Cana is still part of the Christmas story. But the wedding at Cana is also “the first of the signs given by Jesus” at the beginning of his public ministry. In that sense, the wedding at Cana is the opening of Jesus’ public ministry.

The narrative of the wedding at Cana is not just an ordinary report of a traditional wedding as they used to take place about 2000 years ago in Israel. Let us consider the gospel text for a moment. The first thing we note is that there is no question of a bride at this wedding... moreover, the name of the bridegroom is never mentioned... Then they ran out of wine and one of the guests changes water into a quality wine, not a few bottles, but about 520 litres... This is definitively not a written-up report on a simple wedding day. St John uses this wedding story to tell us much more than what happened on a couple’s wedding day. Let us not unnecessarily conclude that the wedding at Cana was not an historical event. But let us say that this event was recorded as a sign, as a means to tell us something else.

Today’s gospel passage opens with these words: “There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee”. This liturgical reading omits four words with which the story really begins: “On the third day, there was a wedding at Cana.” The omission of the words ‘On the third day’ in the liturgical reading is a pity, because the expression ‘on the third day’ is a key to help us understand correctly the sense of the whole narrative. In the Old Testament, the words ‘on the third day’ introduce the time of a theophany. Let us think for example of the meeting between God and Israel on Sinai: “On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings...The Lord descended upon it in fire”. We know also that the theophany par excellence, the resurrection, will happen on the third day.

Consequently, the wedding at Cana, which John tells us took place on the third day, is really an epiphany, a manifestation, a sign of the relationship of God with his people Israel. Jesus was sent into the world by God to espouse his people, to communicate his divinity to his people of which we are part. Jesus came to give us a share in his divinity. In Jesus, God became man so that we may become God, so that we may be divinised. The wedding at Cana is a sign of the wedding between God and humanity. The bridegroom is Christ who comes on behalf of God his Father to espouse the Church, and through the Church the whole of humanity.

A wedding evokes a life of intimacy between the bride and the bridegroom. In Jesus we are invited to a life of intimacy with God through prayer and through love of our brothers and sisters who were created in the image and likeness of God. When we love our brothers and sisters, it is the Lord whom we love. This gospel passage is an opportunity offered to us to ask ourselves

where we stand concerning our life of intimacy with God through our prayer life and in regard to love for our neighbour, for it is through prayer and love for others that we relate to God.

A wedding is all about joy, the joy of the bride and the bridegroom, and their joy which they share with others. In our first reading from the Prophet Isaiah, we heard:

“Like a young man marrying a virgin,  
so will the one who built you wed you,  
and as the bridegroom rejoices in his bride,  
so will your God rejoice in you”.

God rejoices in us and we are called to find our joy in God. If we are sad, dwelling in darkness, depressed, could it not be because we don't give time to our personal relationship with the Lord in prayer? If we turn our back on the Lord, desolation invades us. If we keep our eyes fixed upon the Lord, the Lord communicates his joy to us. Our joy is important not only for ourselves, but also for others who await our testimony. God counts on us to reveal Him to the world. If others see our joy, they will be led to discover the Lord who is the source of our joy.

A wedding is all about newness of life and hope. This newness of life does not imply that we forget the past, but that the past is transformed. The water for the ablutions of the Jews of the first covenant became quality wine for the people of the new covenant.

Jesus espoused our humanity in order to transform it and renew it. This happened not only at Cana when the water was changed into wine, but throughout the whole of Jesus' ministry. Jesus will change the tears of the widow of Nain into joy. He will change the selfishness of Zacchaeus into a self-giving love. He will change the despair of one of the thieves on Calvary into hope. And on Easter morning he will change death into life. Do we really believe that Jesus is still coming to renew our lives, to make all things new?

In this year of mercy, it is not out of order to see in the wedding at Cana a sign of God's mercy for his people. When God manifests himself, it is always with an overflowing generosity: Let us not forget our gospel passage: About five hundred and twenty litres of water were changed into rich wine! The generosity of Jesus at Cana is a sign of God's compassion for his people whose wine had run out. God is merciful to us beyond all measure. The generosity of God is seen to be at work in Jesus' years of ministry. Think, for example, of the multiplication of five loaves and two fish able to feed a huge crowd of five thousand men, without counting women and children, and without forgetting the large quantity of left-overs at the end of the day. When God espoused humanity, he was not mean. When God continues to espouse humanity, he is not mean! His self-giving love for humankind is without limits. If we need something and asks for it in prayer God will give us what we need and even much more than what we need, much more than what we dare to ask for. Obviously, this does not always happen immediately and in the way we wait for it. God's ways are not always our ways. But Wisdom knows what she does! God's mercy is much more than human kindness. The Lord does not only give but He for-gives and He forgives without limit. Once again let us not hesitate to take time to welcome God's mercy in our lives today. God's mercy is always what we need and most of the time without knowing it.

God espoused our humanity with hope! Let us not disappoint Him in His expectation! Let us welcome Him wholeheartedly! Let us allow Him to work in us and transform us! Then, through us and with the help of God's grace the world will be transformed into a better place.