



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C

The Wedding at Cana

Readings: Isaiah 62: 1-5, Ps 95, 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11, John 2: 1-11

The story of this miracle, recorded by St John as the first miracle of Jesus' ministry, may seem a strange one to many.

Luxurious, implausible, unnecessary, flashy, altogether out of keeping with the seriousness of His many healing miracles and an example of, albeit apparently, reluctant showmanship. However, the transformation of c. 140 gallons of water into wine may indicate that, unlike the average 'Joe', Jesus really is capable of running the proverbial in a brewery but this is scarcely the uplifting spiritual food we are looking for.

What we must always remember, when dealing with the sacred text of St. John's Gospel is that there is no casual word, no unnecessary aside,. John's account is not like that of the other three so-called Synoptic Gospels. They give, as their title implies, a synopsis of the Life of Christ. John, on the other hand, gives us, by his careful choice of stories, memories, a precise and extraordinary account of the Cosmic implications of Jesus' ministry. Not a word is wasted, not an allusion is without deeper meaning. Every detail is sifted and chosen for the unique work of Gospel form and ministry. The Gospels are a category all to themselves. They are not, as some think, mere biographies of Jesus who is the Christ. They are written only to convince

you of that fact. They are working documents for Mission. For, as St John says at the end of his gospel, if all of the facts of the Lord Jesus' life were known there would not be enough books in the world to contain them. This is, on reflection, scarcely surprising for the One who, as John's Prologue records, was 'in the beginning with God and was God' and 'without whom was not anything made that was made.'

So these are necessarily selected highlights with one purpose in mind – to rescue the Lost Sheep and bring him home, to inspire repentance and conversion.

Of the wedding itself we are given little or no facts. We are not even vouchsafed the identities of the happy couple – though the years since have been full of speculation, running from Nathaniel's wedding to that of a cousin of Mary, to the ad absurdum of the Gnostic marriage of Mary Magdalene to Jesus Himself.

We are told that this wedding takes place on the Third Day. Time is never without significance in John. His readers would, like us, instantly have referenced other Third Days - one at Creation where the Earth emerges from the waters of Chaos and the other where the Risen Lord overcomes the powers of death.

The Cana event draws immediate attention to who Jesus is. He is, we are told, along with His disciples, a guest – so much for the gnostic nonsense. His, and their, presence, is mentioned as an apparent afterthought to the presence there of His Mother, Mary. John, of course, being the designated carer of Our Lady, from the Calvary onwards, knows the significance of Mary and her story. On Calvary, we recall, Jesus gives His Mother to the disciple whom He loves (that is both John and, praise God,

subsequently you and me) and to Mary he gives us, with John, as her children. Henceforth we are brothers and sisters of Christ, children of the New Eve, the Mother of all who will live forever.

The Miracle takes place at a Wedding, the highest place of the celebration and glorification of Human Love.

When the wine runs out, when human hospitality and provision fail – a social disaster in the culture – Mary tells Jesus. She intercedes for the failed humanity around her. And she does so to the One whom she knows to be the very wedding Himself, Jesus.

Jesus is the Wedding of Heaven and Earth. This is the central fact that underpins our understanding of this primary miracle

Jesus' response is less than one might have hoped for and the ground of much Protestant glee at the apparent 'rudeness' to Mary. Jesus replies, 'Woman, what is that to you and to me?' Jesus use of the word 'WOMAN' is neither aggressive nor offensive. In the same word He will use lovingly from the Cross to effect the relationship between Mary and His Beloved Disciple. Mary is indeed 'WOMAN' – for she is the New Eve, quintessential sinless and immaculate origin of the new creation.

That Jesus response is not dismissive is indicated by Mary's next move. She simply tells the servants to, 'Do whatever He tells you.' – thereby , incidentally giving us the motto of the Church.

Jesus tells the servants to fill the water jars to the brim. These are the great amphorae used for ritual purification – the remnant of which is the Synagogue mikvah ritual bath. Remnants of it inspire the Islamic cleansing

rituals. But most significantly the allusion is to the font, the fountainhead waters of Christian Baptism.

When the waters of purification are filled up, Christ instructs the faithful servants to draw the water out and take it to the now desperate, embarrassed and humiliated steward of the Feast.

I don't know about you but, if I were one of those servants , it would take a huge amount of faith in Jesus to do that. Imagine being told to take water to this furious steward. His reaction was not going to be pleasant and a good thrashing the most likely outcome for the idiot servants who have thus caused him further humiliation.

But they are obedient, 'fools for Christ's sake' as St Paul later describes the servants of Christ. And, in their obedience, the water of the Purification becomes the wine of the Feast. It is, unsurprisingly to those of us who know its origin, much better than any human provision heretofore and in a glorious abundance of reckless generosity.

From the human failings of sin, where our generosity and hospitality run out and our love fails, we journey through repentance and the Waters of Baptism, and ,as obedient servants we move, in Faith, through to the Feast which does not fail. So the Baptismal water becomes the Wine of the Chalice, the Blood of Christ Himself, and He invites us to become spectacularly inebriate with His endless gift of celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass prefigured at Cana on this the Third Day of forever.

The Wedding of Heaven and Earth, Jesus, invites us to the wedding. He transforms our failure, by our penitence and obedience and through the loving intercession of His Mother , and now ours, into the endless thanksgiving of the Mass and the love and mercy of the Kingdom. So the

first miracle prefigures the last miracle as the last miracle fulfils the first.
It is thus and thus alone, through penitence, obedience and faith in Jesus,
that we become the guests of the Wedding at the Eternal Banquet of God.