

Homily for the 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

The Gospel today is about the miracle at the Wedding Feast of Cana.

Years ago, in the seminary, I remember the professor asking the class what was the point of the story in the Gospel?

I jokingly replied, "If you're going to get married be sure you get a good caterer for the reception".

He was not amused.

The story speaks for itself, and I would like to say three things about it.

Firstly, it is the first miracle worked by Christ, "My time has not yet come". Some people are uncomfortable about miracles in the Gospel stories and seek to demythologise them. They try to explain them away, despite the evidence in the accounts themselves. For example, the feeding of the 5000 could be argued that Christ did not create the food but got people to share what they had. Again, Lazarus was not dead, but that he was woken up out of a coma; this despite the fact the Gospel says "he stinks".

I cannot go down that road. I really do not see the point of it. The Jesus of the Gospels that I follow is the son of God, the second person of the Trinity, God made man. For Him the miraculous is no problem. Turning water into wine does not downgrade or cheapen Him to the level of a magician's trick. Rather it reveals the love and sensitivity of a God, who on certain rare occasions, is willing to alter or suspend the order and nature of things that he created, for the benefit of men. He is not the abstract, distant creator, caught within rules of His own making, but a loving personal God who is not outside of His creation, and He is also within His creation and with His creatures. Miracles for me enhance the concept of God. They do not degrade Him.

Secondly, Cana shows us a wonderful aspect to Mary. Who knows how serious Christ was when he asked "What is that to me"? It didn't faze Mary. With a quiet confidence that only came from a mother's love and intuition she tells a steward "Do as he tells you to", and the miracle is performed. Mary can ask anything of her son and her secret is love. A great love for God, God's love for her and her great love for us. It is our great loss that we have, for the highest of motives, so spiritualised our concept of Mary that we have all but forgotten

her humanity, her humanness. She knew how to enjoy herself. She was at a wedding feast; she had the practical eye of a woman. She saw that the wine was running out; nobody came to tell her. Why would they? She was a guest. If you think about it, how could her son refuse her anything, she who refused nothing to God. It is one of the great graces of the Church that, on Calvary, Christ left us in her care, and that the abiding tradition in the Church has been for us to go to Christ through Mary. Sadly, some people cannot understand that and will seek to misinterpret this tradition of asking through Mary. They address all their prayers directly to God. Of course that is valid, but I haven't the slightest doubt that in honouring the mother you also honour the Son and nothing is taken away from Him.

Indeed, it would seem that Christ delights in honouring His mother by encouraging us to focus our prayers through her. It is a source of great consolation to me that there will be many times in my life when her laughing, loving practical eye will be watching over us. Cana shows us not only the generosity of Christ, but also the generosity of Mary. She must have known that a public miracle and all the fame that went with it, would mark the public ministry of her Son. In so doing she would lose his company, but still she asked. At Cana Mary generously gave Christ to the world. And at what cost to herself? We cannot begin to know.

Thirdly, the turning of the water into wine at Cana is in a certain way reversed every day at our mass. The symbolism is important; Christ took water, symbolic of what is plain, weak, and insipid. He transformed it into wine symbolic of all that is rich, joyful and celebrated. In the early Church, those participating in the Eucharist, after the example of Christ at the Last Supper, drank from a chalice. But it seems that the wine wasn't always the best. It sometimes upset their stomachs and made them sick. So, the bishops gave a dispensation for the wine to be watered down. That in the origin and the reason why, still symbolically, today the priest at the Offertory takes the chalice, pour into it some wine, and then just adds the a drop of water, silently adding a prayer "By the mystery of this water and wine we come to share in the Divinity of Christ, who humbled Himself, to share in our humanity. It is a wish and a prayer that the poor little drop of water, symbolic of our poor and weak humanity, may be absorbed into the wine, a symbol of the richness that is the Divinity of Christ. The water becomes wine, and the wine at the Consecration becomes the blood of Christ. It is our joy and our destiny to become one with Christ, absorbed into Christ, whose depth and richness is the source of our happiness.

In a way, the miracle at Cana is repeated once more. Water is turned into wine, the gift of Christ, but now it is no longer symbolic or incomplete, for the wine becomes the Blood of Christ, not just a gift of Christ, but the gift of Christ Himself to us.

Just a few words about Cana.