

2nd Sunday (C)

17th January 2016

‘Do whatever He tells you’

Is 62: *as the bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so will your God rejoice in you*

Ps 95: *... His wonders among all the peoples*

1Cor 12: *a variety of gifts ...*

Jn 2: 1–11: *His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever He tells you.”*

I suppose mothers always take an active interest in the weddings of their sons and daughters, praying for ‘the right person’ to show up, promoting a possible wedding when they think the right person *has* shown up, pursuing all the practical arrangements if the wedding comes off. Certainly I know that after my sister got married her mother-in-law told us how she’d been praying for it for ages! It’s also true, of course, that weddings lead to weddings ... there’s no better catalyst for a romance than a nice wedding. Lots of engagements seem to follow hot on the heels of someone else’s wedding!

So I wonder what Our Lady was thinking as she took up her invitation to this wedding at Cana. She is mentioned as a guest ahead of her Son and His disciples: they seem just to have been invited along with her; Jesus has not yet come into His own or shown His glory. And yet Mary seems to have had her eye on Jesus during the

wedding feast. No sooner does the catastrophe occur that they run out of drink, than she turns to her Son as if to say, ‘Here’s your chance to show yourself.’ And despite a certain reluctance, Jesus does, and in such abundance — the equivalent of 1000 bottles of wine!

In a way we can think of this as Jesus’s engagement party. God has loved mankind from all eternity, and marriage images of God’s love for His people Israel are common in the Old Testament as in the first reading: this imagery captures the undying and passionate love of God the bridegroom for Israel the bride. But in Jesus this love has reached an altogether new level of intimacy: God has come among us, and here is His first sign, His public engagement. Jesus is committing Himself to His disciples and to His people — His Church — and with this abundant gift of wine He’s giving a hint of the good things which He’ll pour out upon His Church: especially the grace of the Eucharist, His blood poured out on the Cross. If this wedding at Cana is like His engagement, it looks forward to the Crucifixion on Calvary which is His marriage: the

solemn and irrevocable moment at which He gives up His body for His bride, promising to be with her for ever, with us, the Church. This is when His 'hour' really will come.

Let's go back, for a moment, to His mother Mary. By the end of the wedding feast at Cana she has taken the back seat. She came as the more important, she leaves as the less important; in the face of this miracle she sees that Jesus is now coming into His own, and she must serve Him, as a disciple even though she is His mother. Jesus refers to her as 'Woman,' not because he was being rude to her, but because her role was changing: no longer was she just His mother in flesh and blood, but she was now taking on a new status as mother of the Church; the hint here is fulfilled on the Cross when Jesus says to her, "Woman, behold your son" and gives her to us as our mother.

Mary's role as our mother is as an intercessor. She intercedes for us. What do we mean by this? Not that she takes a higher profile than Jesus. It's quite untrue to suggest that we as Catholics *worship* Our Lady. We see in this account from Cana how having brought her Son to the

brink of manhood, she takes a demure step backwards, but nevertheless, she is the one who presents the need to Him: "They have no wine." She is the one who points the servants to Jesus: "Do whatever He tells you."

Mary does the same for us: she takes our prayers and offers them to her Son; and she turns to us and reminds us to do whatever He has taught. We often ask other people to pray for us, don't we? And which would naturally do? Ask someone we feel is a holy person, or ask someone who seems to live their life less closely with God? We'd ask the holier person, wouldn't we? So, we ask Mary to pray for us because she is the holiest one of our race, the closest to her Son. It was therefore such a tragedy that 16th century Protestant reformers threw out so much devotion to Our Lady in this country, smashed the statues and abolished the prayers. How could we be close to Jesus and not be close to His mother? How could we do without her prayers assisting our feeble prayers? She who cares deeply for the race into which God her Son has married his whole self.