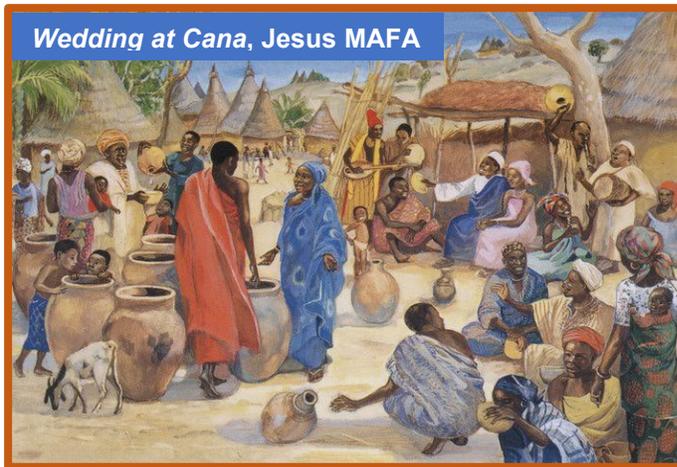


REFLECTIONS FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ 16 January 2022

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

We are now in Ordinary Time in the Church's liturgical year – a time when Jesus begins and carries out his public ministry leading eventually to his death and Resurrection. There are three transition moments to this Ordinary Time – the Epiphany when the Good News reaches out to the ends of Earth, the Baptism of Jesus when God declares, "You are my Son, the Beloved," and today Jesus' first public sign at the wedding feast of Cana. All three transition moments focus on rejoicing and right relationships.

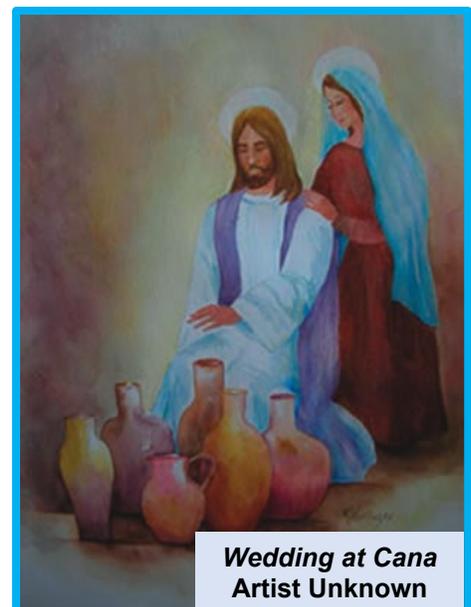


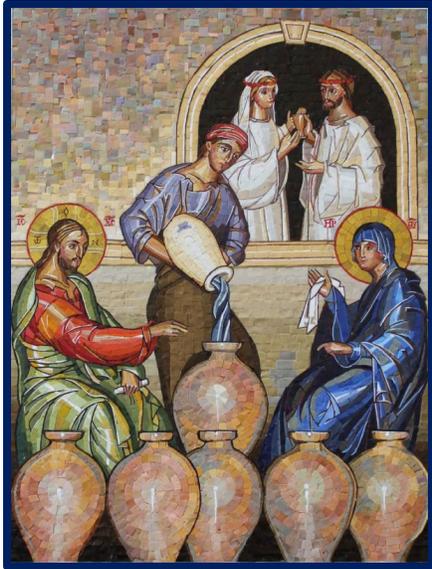
"I will not keep silent" – with these words spoken by God or by the prophet for God, our first reading from Isaiah begins. It comes as the people of Judah return from exile in Babylon. They see it as a sign of God's forgiveness for the wrong that they have done. The wonder of their restored relationship not only with their land but with their God is that God loves them so deeply, calls them "My Delight"! The prophet even uses the marriage metaphor to describe the intimacy of the relationship. The last words of the reading ring out, "So shall your God rejoice over you."

That sense of right relationship, a new beginning and not keeping silent about it carries into Psalm 96 where Earth sings a new song to the Lord along with the families of all peoples and all nations. "Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all Earth" (Ps 96:1).

The echoes of rejoicing, right relationships, and transition moments flow through the story of the wedding at Cana. In all four Gospels, Jesus' entry into public life begins with his Baptism by John and the calling of the disciples in Galilee. Mark follows with the healing of the man with the unclean spirit; Matthew with the temptation in the desert and the Sermon on the Mount; Luke with the teaching in the synagogue in Nazareth. John also returns to Galilee for the calling of the disciples, but his first act of public ministry happens in Cana.

"I will not keep silent" could also begin this story of the wedding feast. Mary, who is attending the wedding with Jesus and his disciples, notices that there is no more wine. She not only notices but, in her compassion, chooses to do something about it. When she speaks to Jesus, he dismisses her, saying that his hour had not yet come. But she pays no attention and tells the servants to do whatever Jesus says. Jesus has no choice! He acts on his mother's direction. It is she who startles him into realizing that his hour had indeed come.





Wedding at Cana, Modern Icon

Jesus does not call Mary by name (nor does the Gospel writer). Rather Jesus calls her “Woman” (Jn 2:4). This is a most unusual way for a son to address his mother even in Jesus’ time. The only other time in John’s Gospel that Jesus will speak to her he will use the same title, “Woman, here is your son” (Jn 19:26) as he gives her into the care of the disciple whom he loved (also unnamed). This is intentional. Mary has a special role in Jesus’ public ministry as she does in his incarnation. She calls him into ministry at Cana – she calls him to carry out the first sign of many signs that will “reveal his glory” and lead him to the cross and Resurrection. She will be there at his death, marking the end of his public ministry, and his transition to his new risen life. Veronica Lawson rsm expresses it this way, “This ‘woman’ believes in him and invites the servants at the marriage feast to obey his word. While Jesus performs this first ‘sign’ that leads his disciples to faith, the role played by this faith-filled woman casts her in the role of ‘witness to the light’ and proclaimer of the Word that brings life.

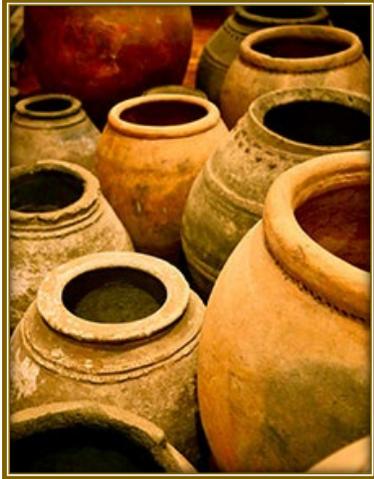
The sign which Jesus works here is the turning of the water into wine, not just ordinary wine but the finest of wines! Wine is an important metaphor in Jesus’ time. Amos speaks of the day when “the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it” (Amos 9:13). Isaiah speaks of the feast that God will prepare for all peoples, “a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines ... of well-aged wines strained clear” (Is 25:6). The abundance of fine wine is a symbol of the abundance of joy that awaits not only Israel, but all peoples on the day of God’s salvation.

In his first sign, Jesus shows us exactly what the people in Judah returning from exile had learned and what Earth has known since the creation of the cosmos – our God is a God who nourishes us with life-giving fruits of Earth, who loves us intimately, and who blesses us abundantly.

Pope Francis, during his trip to Chile in 2018, beautifully says what all of this means for us in our ordinary, everyday living:

Like Mary at Cana, let us make an effort to be more attentive in our squares and towns, to notice those whose lives have been “watered down,” who have lost—or have been robbed of—reasons for celebrating; those whose hearts are saddened. And let us not be afraid to raise our voices and say: “they have no wine.” The cry of the people of God, the cry of the poor, is a kind of prayer; it opens our hearts and teaches us to be attentive. Let us be attentive, then, to all situations of injustice and to new forms of exploitation that risk making so many of our brothers and sisters miss the joy of the party. And, like Mary, let us say: they have no wine, Lord.





Paul's first letter to the Corinthians tells us how to do what Pope Francis is challenging us to do. Paul reminds us that each one of us has gifts given by the Spirit, by the Lord, by God (1 Cor 12:6). These gifts vary, but each one matters. "All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses" (1 Cor 12:11).

These gifts come to us in different ways even over the course of our own lives. When we were young children, we shared our gifts in ways that differ from how we shared our personal gifts when we were young adults or middle-aged or today. John tells us that there were six stone water jars at the wedding feast at Cana. In the Jewish tradition, the number for completeness is seven. The seventh water jar holds your gifts today.

This week, I invite you to two sets of reflections:

- What were your unique gifts shared in your life before now? What are your unique gifts at this time in your life? What are the gifts you hold in the seventh jar?
- How can you use the abundance of your gifts from your seventh jar to respond to others who are in need of "new wine"?

Let us conclude with a poem prayer from the Presbyterian minister [Thom Shuman](#) who brings all our readings together in a lovely manner:

We come in these endless days, Precious God,
people in need of the constancy of your love:
may we drink deeply from your fountain of life;
may we continue to be guided by your Light.

We gather in these weary days, Water-changing God,
people looking for signs of hope and wonder:
may we drink deeply from your fountain of grace;
may our weariness be wrapped in your Hope.

We worship in these overwhelming days, Gifting God,
people who try to point others to Jesus:
may we drink deeply from your fountain of joy;
may our life be strengthened by your Life.

Wedding Feast at Cana
Aloysius McVeigh rsm (Ireland)

