

(5-13 JULY 2015)

HOLY MASS FOR FAMILIES

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER

Samanes Park, Guayaquil (Ecuador)

Monday, 6 July 2015

The Gospel passage which we have just heard is the first momentous sign in the Gospel according to John. Mary's maternal concern is seen in her plea to Jesus: "They have no wine," and Jesus' reference to "his hour" will be more fully understood later, in the story of his Passion.

And this is good, because it allows us to see Jesus' eagerness to teach, to accompany, to heal and to give joy, thanks to the words of his Mother: "They have no wine."

The wedding at Cana is repeated in every generation, in every family, in every one of us and our efforts to let

our hearts find rest in strong love, fruitful love and joyful love. Let us make room for Mary, "the Mother" as the evangelist calls her. Let us journey with her now to Cana.

Mary is attentive, she is attentive in the course of this wedding feast, she is concerned for the needs of the newlyweds. She is not closed in on herself, worried only about her little world. Her love makes her "outgoing" towards others. She does not seek her friends to say what is happening, to criticize the poor organization of the wedding feast. And since she is attentive, she discretely notices that the wine has run out. Wine is a sign of happiness, love and plenty. How many of our adolescents and young people sense that there is no longer any of that wine to be found in their homes? How many women, sad and lonely, wonder when love left, when it slipped away from their lives? How

many elderly people feel left out of family celebrations, cast aside and longing each day for a little love, from their sons and daughters, their grandchildren, their great grandchildren? This lack of this "wine" can also be due to unemployment, illness and difficult situations which our families around the world may experience. Mary is not a "demanding" mother, nor a mother-in-law who revels in our lack of experience, our mistakes and the things we forget to do. Mary, quite simply, is a Mother! She is there, attentive and concerned. It is gratifying to hear this: Mary is a Mother! I invite you to repeat this with me: *Mary is a Mother!* Once again: *Mary is a Mother!* And once more: *Mary is a Mother!*

But Mary, at the very moment she perceives that there is no wine, approaches Jesus with confidence: this means that *Mary prays*. She goes

to Jesus, she prays. She does not go to the steward, she immediately tells her Son of the newlyweds' problem. The response she receives seems disheartening: "What does it have to do with you and me? My hour has not yet come" (v. 4). But she nonetheless places the problem in God's hands. Her deep concern to meet the needs of others hastens Jesus' hour. And Mary was a part of that hour, from the cradle to the cross. She was able "to turn a stable into a home for Jesus, with poor swaddling clothes and an abundance of love" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 286). She accepted us as her sons and daughters when the sword pierced her heart. She teaches us to put our families in God's hands; she teaches us to pray, to kindle the hope which shows us that our concerns are also God's concerns.

Praying always lifts us out of our worries and concerns. It makes us

rise above everything that hurts, upsets or disappoints us, and helps to put ourselves in the place of others, in their shoes. The family is a school where prayer also reminds us that we are not isolated individuals; we are one and we have a neighbor close at hand: he or she is living under the same roof, is a part of our life, and is in need.

And finally, *Mary acts*. Her words, "Do whatever he tells you" (v. 5), addressed to the attendants, are also an invitation to us to open our hearts to Jesus, who came to serve and not to be served. Service is the sign of true love. Those who love know how to serve others. We learn this especially in the family, where we become servants out of love for one another. In the heart of the family, no one is rejected; all have the same value. I remember once how my mother was asked which of her five children – we are five brothers – did

she love the most. And she said: it is like the fingers on my hand, if I prick one of them, then it is as if the others are pricked also. A mother loves her children as they are. And in the family, children are loved as they are. None are rejected. "In the family we learn how to ask without demanding, to say 'thank you' as an expression of genuine gratitude for what we have been given, to control our aggressivity and greed, and to ask forgiveness when we have caused harm, when we quarrel, because in all families there are quarrels. The challenge is to then ask for forgiveness. These simple gestures of heartfelt courtesy help to create a culture of shared life and respect for our surroundings" (*Laudato Si'*, 213). The family is the nearest hospital; when a family member is ill, it is in the home that they are cared for as long as possible. The family is the first school for the young, the best home for the

elderly. The family constitutes the best "social capital." It cannot be replaced by other institutions. It needs to be helped and strengthened, lest we lose our proper sense of the services which society as a whole provides. Those services which society offers to its citizens are not a type of alms, but rather a genuine "social debt" with respect to the institution of the family, which is foundational and which contributes to the common good.

The family is also a small Church, called a "domestic Church" which, along with life, also mediates God's tenderness and mercy. In the family, we imbibe faith with our mother's milk. When we experience the love of our parents, we feel the closeness of God's love.

In the family, and we are all witnesses of this, miracles are performed with what little we have,

with what we are, with what is at hand... and many times, it is not ideal, it is not what we dreamt of, nor what "should have been". There is one detail that makes us think: the new wine, that good wine mentioned by the steward at the wedding feast of Cana, came from the water jars, the jars used for ablutions, we might even say from the place where everyone had left their sins...it came from the "worst" because "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (*Rom 5:20*). In our own families and in the greater family to which we all belong, nothing is thrown away, nothing is useless. Shortly before the opening of the *Jubilee Year of Mercy*, the Church will celebrate the Ordinary Synod devoted to the family, deepen her spiritual discernment and consider concrete solutions and help to the many difficult and significant challenges facing families today. I ask you to pray fervently for this

intention, so that Christ can take even what might seem to us impure, like the water in the jars scandalizing or threatening us, and turn it – by making it part of his “hour” – into a miracle. The family today needs this miracle.

All this began because “they had no wine.” It could all be done because a woman – the Virgin Mary – was attentive, left her concerns in God's hands and acted sensibly and courageously. But there is a further detail, the best was to come: everyone went on to enjoy the finest of wines. And this is the good news: the finest wines are yet to be tasted; for families, the richest, deepest and most beautiful things are yet to come. The time is coming when we will taste love daily, when our children will come to appreciate the home we share, and our elderly will be present each day in the joys of life. The finest of wines is expressed

by hope, this wine will come for every person who stakes everything on love. And the best wine is yet to come, in spite of all the variables and statistics which say otherwise. The best wine will come to those who today feel hopelessly lost. Say it to yourselves until you are convinced of it. Say it to yourselves, in your hearts: the best wine is yet to come. Whisper it to the hopeless and the loveless. Have patience, hope, and follow Mary's example, pray, open your heart, because the best wine is yet to come. God always seeks out the peripheries, those who have run out of wine, those who drink only of discouragement. Jesus feels their weakness, in order to pour out the best wines for those who, for whatever reason, feel that all their jars have been broken.

As Mary bids us, let us "do what the Lord tells us." Do what he tells you. And let us be thankful that in this,

our time and our hour, the new wine, the finest wine, will make us recover the joy of families, the joy of living in a family. Let it be so.

Remarks of the Holy Father at the end of Mass at Samanes Park in Guayaquil:

May God bless you and accompany you. I pray for each of your families and I ask you to follow Mary's example. Please do not forget to pray for me. Until we meet again!

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