

"Do whatever he tells you"

Gospel for the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C) and commentary.

Gospel (Jn 2:1-12)

On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast.” So they took it. When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, “Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.” This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his

brothers and his disciples; and there they stayed for a few days.

Commentary

At the beginning of his public life Jesus goes with his disciples to a wedding feast to bless and sanctify the celebration of human love, by his presence. "What is so strange about the fact that the One who came into the world to celebrate his own wedding feast went to that house where the wedding was being celebrated?" [1]. The young bride and groom at this wedding included God in their plans, and so became models for all those who want to form a lifelong union. The protagonist of the scene is nonetheless Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who the narrator does not hesitate to mention even before her Son.

The celebration of a wedding in the ancient East could last several days, especially if the guests made long journeys on foot from distant places. This fact somewhat explains the inattention of the bride and groom and those in charge, who perhaps as the days of celebration passed did not notice that the wine ran out.

What a disaster! "How can one celebrate a wedding feast and make merry without what the prophets indicated as a typical element of the messianic banquet (cf. Am 9:13-14; Jo 2:24; Is 25:6)?" [2]. Mary, with her practical feminine intuition, notices this mundane yet crucial detail: she is accustomed to focusing her attention and interest on others.

When she discovers the problem, she immediately turns to her Son to solve it. With faith and diligence, she gathers the servants and dares to make a public appeal to Jesus' divine condition: "They have no wine." — *"See how she asks her Son, at Cana.*

And how she insists, confidently, with perseverance.”^[3]

Mary's request transcends the scene at Cana, invoking in Jesus' heart the promise of salvation announced by God in Genesis. That is why, with biblical solemnity, Jesus calls her, "Woman," and expresses an apparent reproach because his *hour* has not come. Mary seems to ignore this reproach: "His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'" These are the last words of Mary recorded in the Gospels. They are like a maternal legacy for all humanity.

Jesus not only yields to his Mother's request but also accepts the collaboration of the servants that Mary presents to him. He who normally multiplies wine through water absorbed into vines in the fields, now accelerates the process through water poured by the work of

men. When we are generous and use the means at our disposal — "Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water,' and they filled them up to the brim" — God blesses our efforts with his sanctifying action. He transforms the human task into a divine work, a sign of his love for all. "What is commonplace becomes something extraordinary, something supernatural, when we have the good will to heed what God is asking of us."[4]

We can notice two more details. The account says that there were six jars there whose capacity would be equivalent to a total of almost 600 liters. The water of the purification of the Jews is turned by God into excellent and very abundant wine because "God's feast with mankind has begun."[5].

The great quantity of wine symbolizes the immense love of God

for mankind and prefigures the blood of the Lamb, who immolates himself completely to draw all men to himself. It also symbolizes the Christian's self-giving to others in the new commandment of love, for which the measure consists in being immeasurable. Mary brings forward the hour of Jesus, the hour of the Paschal Mystery of his Death and Resurrection, hinted at in the time reference with which the story began: "On the third day..."

Finally, Jesus says, "Take it to the steward of the feast." The Greek text calls him *architriclinium*, literally the "chief of the triple seat." He was the guest who reclined in the place of honor. He praised the greatness of the celebration, and expertly sampled the products of the feast. These words of praise will make it apparent to the reader, who knows the origin of the wine, the greatness which awaits those who, like the

bride and groom at Cana, depend on God in their lives; those who, like Mary, trust in God's power; those who, like the servants, love hidden and effective service.

[1] St. Augustine, *In Ioannem*, Tract. 8.

[2] Pope Francis, *Catechesis*, 8 June 2016.

[3] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, 502.

[4] St. Josemaría, *Holy Rosary*, no. 18.

[5] Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth. From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, Doubleday, New York, 2007.

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