

February 11: Our Lady of Lourdes

Gospel for February 11, feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, and commentary.

Gospel (*Jn 2:1-11*)

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.

Commentary

Today we celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. Every February 11 we commemorate Mary's first appearance to Saint Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes. Saint John Paul II, in 1992, established the World Day of the Sick on this date. The story of Lourdes shows us how decisive Mary is in the history of humanity. Just like in today's Gospel scene. At the wedding at Cana, Mary takes on a great role. The narrator has no qualms about mentioning her before her Son in the wedding story.

The celebration of a wedding in the ancient East could last several days – especially if the guests had to travel on foot from distant places. This fact

may help excuse the oversight of the bride and groom and those in charge, who after several days of celebration failed to notice that the wine was running out. But it was a serious problem: “How could a wedding feast be celebrated properly without what the prophets saw as a key element in the messianic banquet?”

(cf. *Amos 9:13-14; Jn 2:24; Is 25:6*). ”^[1]

This small but important detail does not go unnoticed by Mary, who with her feminine intuition is always attentive to others’ needs. And she turns right away to her Son for help, and even dares to appeal in public to his divine status: “Mary, teacher of prayer. See how she asks her Son, at Cana. And how she insists, confidently, with perseverance. And how she succeeds. Learn from her.”^[2]

Mary’s request also transcends the scene at Cana and awakens in her Son’s heart the promise of salvation announced in Genesis. That is why

Jesus with biblical solemnity calls her “Woman,” and even seems to reproach her because his time had not yet come. But Mary seems to overlook this reproach and tells the servants “Do whatever he tells you.” These are the final words of Mary recorded in the Gospels. They are, as it were, a maternal legacy for all mankind.

Jesus not only gives in to his Mother’s request, but also accepts the assistance of the servants: “fill the jars with water.” When we are generous and employ the means within our reach, we enable God to act. He blesses with his sanctifying action and transforms our human work into a divine work, a sign of his love for all men and women. “And the most commonplace becomes something extraordinary, something supernatural, when we have the good will to do what God asks of us.”^[3]

The story says that there were six large jars of water, whose total capacity was about 150 gallons. The water for the Jewish purification rites is converted by God into excellent and abundant wine because “the feast of God with humanity has begun.”^[4] The great amount of wine symbolizes God’s immense love for us and prefigures the blood of the Lamb that would be poured out so abundantly to draw all mankind to Himself. It also symbolizes the new commandment to love as Christ loved, whose measure is to have no measure. Mary advances Jesus’ hour: the hour of the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection, hinted at by the words with which this Gospel passage begins: “on the third day.”

We are shown here the greatness of Mary, who can even change God’s original plans. What will Jesus fail to do for his mother? Mary will obtain

for us the graces we need to grow in our own interior life. She will help us and those around us to heal the wounds of soul or body. As Pope Francis said on February 11, 2022: “Let us ask through her intercession that our Lord may grant health of soul and body to all those who are suffering due to any illness and the current pandemic, and strengthen those who assist and accompany them in this time of trial they are going through.”^[5]

^[1] Pope Francis, *Catechesis*, 8 June 2016.

^[2] Saint Josemaria, *The Way*, no. 502.

^[3] Saint Josemaria, *Letter*, 14 September 1951, no. 23.

^[4] Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth. From the Baptism to the Transfiguration*, p. 298.

^[5] Pope Francis, Audience, 11 February 2021.

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