

We have now entered the new Liturgical Season called Ordinary Time. It recounts many of the things Jesus did and said during His lifetime. During Ordinary Time, the Church celebrates the fullness of the mystery of our Lord Jesus. The people of God praise Jesus by celebrating the Paschal Mystery of His death and resurrection.

Although St. Luke is the source of most of our Gospel Readings during this Year C of our Church Calendar, we have a selection from St. John's Gospel today to carry on the theme of Epiphany, the manifestation or revelation of Jesus, and make a seamless transition into the season called Ordinary Time.

In our Gospel story, a temptation might be to connect the wedding at Cana story with our Church's Sacrament of Marriage. The groom's only function in the wedding story was to be the host at the feast, and the bride is not mentioned at all. Marriage was not considered a Sacrament until many centuries after the time of Jesus. Therefore, John could not have been addressing marriage as a Sacrament.

Jesus speaks about His *hour*, a reference to that time when His truest identity and glory will be revealed in His Resurrection. This *hour* will divide all of history into *before* and *after* with Jesus at the center of God's plan for redemption. The miracle of Cana is a *sign* of what God offers us if we put our faith and trust in Him.

John is pointing the miracle of changing the water into wine as a *sign*. Like all of Jesus' signs and miracles, this points to the greatest of all His *signs*, when He will be lifted up on the cross in obedience to His Father, for the salvation of humanity. This will be how the new covenant-marriage between God and His people will be brought about.

The Cana story actually has more to say about the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Eucharist than about the union of a woman and a man in marriage. In today's Gospel, we have two sacramental *signs*, *water* for Baptism and *wine* for the Holy Eucharist. We recall that these *sacramental signs point to Christ*.

John takes care to tell us that "there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification." This detail is a strong clue that the story speaks of Baptism, however indirectly that may seem. The water in the jars is for the cleansing of the guests' feet. The water of Baptism is for the cleansing of *our sins* by Christ's Blood on the Cross.

Thus, the stone jars of water reflect the baptismal ritual of cleansing or purification in our Catholic faith.

Still more importantly, the *new wine* signals the arrival of the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ. The *old wine, the Old Covenant*, is finished, and Christ represents the *new wine, the New Covenant, the Holy Eucharist*. At the Last Supper, Jesus takes the cup of wine and says: "Take this all of you, and drink from it. This is the cup of My Blood." At the Last Supper and in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist today, wine is changed into the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ. Thus, the central meaning of the Cana miracle is that Jesus has become the *new wine*.

Therefore, the story of the wedding at Cana has more to say to us about Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. In these two Sacraments a change happens that makes us different. Christ came on earth to change people's hearts and to make all things new. He came to change us just as He changed water into wine. His presence among us is an invitation to change our old ways and it is a call to a new way of life in Christ.

The celebration of the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is important for this new way of life in Christ. In the Mass, Jesus invites us to His Table as His intimate friends. Jesus is just as present for us in the Holy Eucharist today as He was for the Apostles at the Last Supper and on Easter Sunday when He appeared to the frightened disciples in the Upper Room.

When does that happen? It only happens at Mass when the priest prays the words of Consecration over the bread and wine. At that point, the appearances of bread and wine remain, but the substance underneath the appearances changes into the real presence, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Every Mass is the scene of this profound miracle.* Every time we come to the Lord's Table at Mass, Jesus feeds us with the rich food of His life-giving Word and His very own Body and Blood in Holy Communion. As we listen to the Readings from Scripture, Jesus Himself is speaking to us, *heart to heart*. As we stand together in prayer, we are touching Jesus through one another, welcoming Him as fully as we welcome each other into our hearts.

Just as material food nourishes our bodies, so does the Body and Blood of Christ nourish, heal, and strengthen our spirits. As manna preserved the Israelites in the

desert, so the Holy Eucharist protects us on our journey to everlasting life. Remember that every time we *participate* in the celebration of the Mass, we are anticipating the heavenly banquet that awaits us.

The joy and happiness Jesus brought into the lives of the people at Cana by His presence is the same joy and happiness we can experience in the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and in Holy Eucharist, provided we follow the simple instruction given by Mary, “Do whatever He tells you.” When we receive the Holy Eucharist, we are invited to leave the Church as changed persons, to follow Christ more deeply and to follow His commandments.

The Gospel concludes by telling us that the “disciples began to believe in Him.” This is the beginning of their faith journey. As they stay and travel with Jesus, so do they come to deeper insights, to a deeper faith. We, likewise, are on a journey of faith into a deeper sharing in Jesus’ Paschal Mystery. Let us go forth today on this Second Sunday in Ordinary Time with the intention of changing our lives into ways Christ wants us to live each day. Through faith our lives will gain a new meaning if we simply do as Mary says. “Do whatever [Jesus] tells you.”