

SECOND SUNDAY IN YEAR, C
THE GUESTS WHO MADE THE DIFFERENCE
“Do whatever he tells you” (Jn. 2: 5).

We Begin the Sundays in Ordinary Time: This Sunday we begin our Readings and reflections from the Ordinary Time, Cycle C. We shall be reading mostly from the Gospel of Luke with some selections from John’s Gospel as we have today. The Gospel today presents us with the “first sign” that Jesus performed – the changing of water into wine at the wedding in Cana. For John, Jesus’ miracles were “signs” pointing to greater realities. This miracle has no parallel in the synoptics. In the Church’s liturgical history, the wedding at Cana, along with the Baptism and the visit of the Magi, has always been associated with the Epiphany of the Lord, because it is understood as the manifestation of Christ’s divinity. This explains why the Church selects this pericope of the gospel for today, following the celebrations of the last two Sundays. The idea of the presence of Jesus at the wedding in the gospel brings back the notion of what we have been celebrating in the last weeks – Jesus, the Emmanuel, God with us. He shows up as One always present with us, in our difficulties, our joys and sorrows.

Understanding the Context: Marriage and weddings are metaphors used in the Scripture to describe God’s Covenant with His people, His Kingdom and Salvation. Jesus is the fulfilment of all these. By this sign, Jesus points to this fact, revealing the lavished love of God for us by the surplus supply of wine at His mother’s request. The context of this generous manifestation is on the second day after Jesus had chosen His first set of disciples (Simon, Andrew, Philip, Nathanael). “There was a wedding in Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and His disciples were also invited.” On this occasion, the unexpected happened, the host ran out of wine. This would have been very embarrassing for the couple and their families. Thanks God, the mother of Jesus and Jesus were there. Seeing what was about to happen, she went to Jesus: “Son, they have no wine.” The action of Mary was a magnanimous gesture of love, compassion, and empathy.

The Symbolisms: The “first sign” of Jesus is one with many symbolisms. Marriage is used in the Old Testament to symbolise God’s covenant with His people (Hos. 2: 21; Jer. 2: 1-8); and in the New Testament it signifies the union of Christ and His Church (Jn. 3: 28-30; Eph. 5: 25-32; Rev. 21: 1-2). These are made perfect in Christ. There is a connection to this in the First Reading, where the Prophet Isaiah speaks to Israel in exile renewing their hope that in no distant time God will restore His affection for Israel and take them back, rejoicing as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride. The many marriage metaphors in this Reading also alludes to Mary as the “Daughter of Zion,” Jesus, by taking up the responsibility of the bridegroom in providing wine at the wedding assumes

the role of a bridegroom. He is the “Bridegroom” rejoicing over His “bride” the Church. Mary’s initiative and decisive action reveal her involvement in Her Son’s mission and introduces her as an intercessor in face of human lack. Though Mary’s intervention was untimely, Jesus’ response to her request reflects the potency of a mother’s love and a son’s obedience. Where love and obedience meet, anything is possible. The lavish abundance of the wine is a foretaste of the surplus banquet that awaits us in the Kingdom (Is. 25: 6ff). The epithet “Woman” used by Jesus in reference to His mother should not be misunderstood as some people are wont to. This expression will be used again by Jesus when He addresses His mother at the foot of the Cross (Jn. 19: 26). By being called “Woman,” Jesus alludes to Mary as the “New Eve,” the mother of all who believe. The presence of Jesus and Mary at the wedding is indicative of their presence in all marital unions. And the lack of wine can be seen as a metaphor for the lack of love and faithful which are grievous threats to marriage today. This first “sign” has deep Eucharistic meaning considering the timing, near the Jewish Passover (Jn2: 13), as the multiplication of loaves (Jn 6: 4). It shows Christ’s intention to prepare a true and perfect banquet with His Body. The wine alludes to the Blood of the New Covenant, which is His Blood.

My dear friends, let us allow ourselves to be challenged and guided by the messages of this “first sign” of Jesus. Let us invite Jesus and create space for Him and His mother in our lives as we journey through this Ordinary time of the Church’s year; let us listen and respond positively to the words of Mary: “Do whatever He tells you;” let us apply the various gifts that God has given us through the One Spirit for the growth of the Church and for the service of our neighbours. The story of the wedding at Cana was significant because Mary and Jesus were *invited* guests. Our stories can have positive changes if we invite Mary and Jesus to be part of it. Sometimes, we do not need to ask for anything before they do it for us. This generous response of Jesus from the request of His mother should prick our consciences to rethink our responses to the requests and needs of the poor around us.