

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson
16th January 2022 - Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings (Year C): 1st: Isaiah 62:1-5. 9-11. 8-12. Psalm: 95. 2nd: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Gospel: John 2:1-11.

A wedding. Cana in Galilee, just over the hill from Nazareth, and Nathaniel's home, he who said 'can any good thing come from Nazareth,' and who met Jesus.

4 words are missing at the beginning of our gospel, 'On the third day.' Numbers always matter in Scripture esp. in John. He refers to the third day since the encounter with Nathaniel. But theologically it has two levels of significance. The third day is actually the seventh day of Jesus' opening week of ministry in this gospel.

John hints at this when he delineates the successive days in chapter 1; the next day, the next day, etc. implying that the creation fashioned in 7 days is being transformed and renewed through Jesus, who manifests his glory on the third day at Cana, just as he reveals his glory by rising from the dead on the third day after his death.

Jewish weddings could be celebrated for an entire week or more. The names of the couple are not mentioned, leaving Jesus and his mother to hold centre stage for the entire episode. Traditional exegesis holds that Jesus sanctifies the covenant of marriage by his presence there.

John's real interest is in the wedding of heaven and earth, as Jesus comes to claim his bride the church.

The amount of new wine is enormous, I gather 800 bottles or more in modern measurement; and all that after men had drunk well. Full and running over, as is everything with God.

Wine a biblical symbol of many associations. An abundance of wine is a sign of the messianic age. It signifies the joys of marital love. The transformation of water into wine anticipates the transubstantiation of wine into blood when Jesus gives himself to the world in the Eucharistic sacrifice. The wine of the marital celebration looks beyond this life to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The six stone water jars are an image of a certain view of God and religion where everything is rather hard work. They represent the idea that you've got to keep on purifying yourself in order to be at rights with God.

Water is essential to all life. Jews, Catholics Muslims have water at their entrances (until Covid). Water is essential, we can't live without it, but is rather bland and insipid. What John is reflecting is that what has really run out is the laborious Judaism of the Pharisees.

Jesus offers so much more of what wine represents: joy, celebration, happiness. John tells us that when we meet Jesus and get to know him and allow him to work in our lives, it's as if our water changes into wine. The flat, anaemic water of Judaism is transformed into the rich and heady wine of the gospel and of the gospel community the Church.

Mary said simply to Jesus "They have no wine." He seemed reluctant to respond. Nonetheless, she knew he would and hence told the servants "Do whatever he tells you." Once they had, he provided for them abundantly.

There are so many needs in our lives today, that Mary could say to Jesus "they have no peace; they have no justice, they have no food, they have no wages, they have no healing. The list can be endless.

In response Jesus may seem to do nothing until we do what he tells us. Only then can he provide for us in abundance. He manifested his glory and his disciples believed in him.

At Cana God is shown reaching out to us, embracing us and drawing us up into a life of union with Him. He came down in order to lift us up. We lift up our hands and hearts in welcome, which is right and just.

Canon Philip Dyson