

2nd Sunday (C)

16th January 2022

'They have no wine'

Is 62: *as the bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so will your God rejoice in you*

Ps 95: ... *His wonders among all the peoples*

1Cor 12: *a variety of gifts ...*

Jn 2: 1–11: *His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you."*

As university students, you should of course be developing an enquiring mind: investigating, questioning, discovering ... this is what it's all about. I suggest that all sorts of questions might arise as we hear this Gospel passage of the 2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time. For a start, why is it that, at the start of Ordinary Time in Year 'C' — the year of *Luke* — we get this passage from St *John's* Gospel instead? And then, just what is this episode mainly about? Is it about Marriage? (It's certainly used by the Church as a possible Gospel passage for weddings.) Is it about the theology of Mary as intercessor? (She certainly starts out as the key guest, mentioned ahead of Jesus in the opening line, and she it is that initiates the miracle.) Or is it placed here at the start of January for some other reason?

It's a famous passage, of course, the Wedding Feast at Cana. And it fits into the timeline ... Last Sunday we had the Baptism of Jesus, that outset of His ministry; and

now at Cana this is His first miracle. His Mother Mary is mentioned ahead of Him in the account, so presumably he hasn't yet come into His own ... But in this moment He does. He lets His glory be seen — at least, by a few — and His disciples believe in Him. So this event at Cana follows on naturally from the feasts that we celebrated recently in latter part of the Christmas season: the *Epiphany* (to the Magi), and then the *Baptism of Jesus*, both of which can be considered 'epiphanies' — public manifestations of Jesus's divinity. Well, in fact there's a triptych of epiphanies. The *Wedding Feast at Cana* is the third of those epiphanies: Jesus performs His first miracle, and His divinity is seen, very clearly, in this miracle, in the abundance of top-quality wine. The miracle is without doubt, and the apostles present believe in Him. In this way there is continuity from the Christmas season (Jesus's birth and infancy) into Ordinary Time (His adult ministry): the Son of God *born* amongst us, initially acknowledged by Mary, Joseph, the Magi; ... He *appeared* amongst us after the hidden years, acknowledged by John the Baptist at the

Jordan; ... now He is *openly active* amongst us, miracles acknowledged by His apostles, ... And so, more and more come to believe in Him.

There are so many lovely details in this episode at Cana, but I think that the key to this 3rd epiphany is that Our Lady models to the Lord's first apostles the need to pray, to turn to Jesus, to implore His help as the Son of God. I'd never really thought about it before, but I've been wondering who actually hears those words from Our Lady's lips, "*They have no wine*"? I'd always previously thought of it just as a comment to Jesus. She knows full well the divine origin of Jesus; Jesus Himself knows full well that He will perform the miracle in this simple setting of a Galilee village wedding. But the apostles do *not* yet know who Jesus is. So, in fact, it's likely that Our Lady is really including the apostles in her comment at this moment. She's showing them that in all things they are to turn to Him. "*Do whatever He tells you,*" she says to the servants who go off to fill the great vats of water. But she's also saying to the apostles the same thing — *Do*

whatever He tells you — that they can rely on Him absolutely, in everything; that they can trust Him in all things. They are new on the scene, they've just been called from their previous occupations by Jesus, whilst Mary has known Jesus to be the Son of God for 30yrs+. Here at Cana she is already becoming the Mother of the apostles, teaching them how to relate to Jesus. This is a great reminder of Our Blessed Lady's special place in the Christian's life. We can rely on her to model our relationship with Christ, and to encourage us in it.

In every single moment, and in every single situation, however simple, daily, domestic, we can turn to Christ. When we're out of strength, out of patience, out of ideas ... We can turn to Him. Our Lady encourages us, and she notices too: "*They have no wine.*" When we are tired and weak, and when we are overwrought by the cares of life, she notices too, and she urges us to turn to Christ with her prayer, "*They have no wine.*" This is the heart of our devotion to the Blessed Mother, that she accompanies us in our prayer, she takes it in hand and she promotes it.

In fact, she often makes that prayer ahead even of our own realising the desperate need.

Let's notice, like the apostles, the Lord's great work, His power to change the ordinary into the extraordinary, the mundane into the glorious. Let's follow the example of her who knows better than any of us the power of Jesus to bring peace and goodness, joy and abundant blessings into our lives. Let's allow Our Lady to be our Mother, and to lead us humbly to follow Jesus and to learn from Him. Let's make sure that we follow her example of prayer — simple, direct, heartfelt, trusting prayer. What is it that we need, ... today, ... that's good for us, ... or that's needed by another, ... by the world? Let's ask for it, and await the Lord's response. He will reply, in His own way, and in His own time, but He will never give anything that is bad or wrong for us ... It is our immortal souls that He longs for, our holiness and salvation.

“The best is yet to come,” it might be said, of the spiritual life, just as the best wine at the wedding was saved for the end, when Jesus intervened. Let's pray for the

closeness to Jesus that we need, so that at the end, when our earthly years are over, we can taste of the heavenly banquet, the superabundant, overflowing, wine of divine joy. Our Lady wants us to be there, where she already is.

This focus, today, on Our Lady's help in teaching us to pray, leads in to one of the highlights of this term at Newman House. Chris will speak more about it at the end of Mass, but we warmly invite you to participate in a ‘Week of Guided Prayer’ — an intensive opportunity from next Sunday until the Friday afterwards to deepen your prayer life. Whilst we are starting a bit tentatively this term — hoping that the virus infection rate is soon on the wane — the Week of Guided Prayer is unaffected, and is an ideal chance to get your prayer life on to a new plane, with renewed vigour. We often say, all of us, that we should pray more and need help in praying. This is your great chance, this year, to receive professional help from committed prayer guides. Let's make a generous response to this invitation from Our Lady, the saints and the Church down the ages, to trust in Jesus as we learn to pray to Him.