

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time + 20 Jan 2025 + Isa 62:1-5 + I Cor 12:4-11 + Jn 2:1-11

It can be hard at times to understand how the Old and New Testaments of the Bible fit together, as they can seem quite different in terms of tone and form. But today's Gospel from St. John shows us how the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New, and how the New is enlightened by the Old. So let's take a deeper look.

To begin, this is only the 2nd chapter of John's Gospel, so this is very early in Jesus' public ministry. And so the big question on everyone's minds is this: *who really is this Jesus of Nazareth?* Well, that's exactly what John is intending to reveal, so he begins by noting that the wedding takes place on the "third day" (a detail that for some reason our Lectionary omits). The *third day* from what we might ask? Well, in order to answer this question, we have to go back to the story of the Exodus in the Old Testament. Moses leads the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt toward the Promised Land. But they must first journey through the desert. This will be a great time of testing for the People, where God reveals Himself to them, and offers them a Covenant, to make them become uniquely *His own* People.

When the People come to Mt. Sinai in the desert, God gives them the Law, and tells them that He will come down the Mountain and reveal Himself to them *on the 3rd day*. So by saying that this miracle occurred on the "3rd day", John is saying that history is about to repeat itself: God is about to reveal Himself and His glory, and offer His People a *new* Covenant. How so? That brings us to the next detail.

Namely, John notes that this miracle occurs at a wedding. This too is fitting, because the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai was like a marriage proposal. When the Israelites arrived at Mt. Sinai, God 'proposes' to them, so to speak. He says: *if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*. And the People accept God's proposal. They joyfully make a vow of their own. They respond: *All that the LORD has spoken we will do*. And then they "consummate" their Covenantal union with God, so to speak, by offering sacrifice.

You see, all throughout the Old Testament, the Covenant relationship between God and His People Israel is spoken of as a marriage. Marriage, after all, for Christians, is not just a *contract*, but a *covenant*. For example, in our 1st reading today from Isaiah, the Prophet reminds the People: *For the LORD delights in you and makes your land his spouse...and as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride so shall your God rejoice in you.*" God is always faithful to His Covenant—to His Bride—His People. In fact, He even delights in them! Unfortunately, the People are not faithful. Time and again, they disobey Him, and give their love to false gods: that is called idolatry. And as is always the case, false lovers end up enslaving the People, and ultimately lead them away from God: into exile away from their true homeland. That's really the sad story of the Old Testament.

We know that this can happen in human marriages as well. When the going gets tough, when the body doesn't look as good, or the fires of passion cool down, eyes start to wander. This is actually one way to understand the miracle in our Gospel. When Israel first entered into Covenant with God, Israel loved God, like a *bridegroom*. But when the 'wine' of youthful joy ran out, Israel was unfaithful to Her spouse. So much so, that there were few faithful souls left in Israel in the time of Christ. They are known as the 'faithful remnant,' and we see them embodied in the person of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a daughter of Israel. So it is fitting that we hear Mary call Jesus' attention to Israel's misery: *They have no wine*, she says.

Now in the Old Testament, wine is associated with joy, abundance, and God's rich blessings (cf. Psalm 4:7, 104:15). This is the deeper meaning behind Mary's request. She is saying that the joy of being God's own people, His bride, has run out, for Israel. Their hearts have become hardened to their divine bridegroom, and only God can make them new again. And this is exactly the work that Jesus is beginning here. And so Mary urges her people to conversion. She instructs the wedding servers: *Do whatever he tells you*. This obedience is the first step in coming back into right relationship with God.

And this too is no small detail. Notice how John records that the headwaiter has no idea where the wine came from, but the servers do know. This is because the servers listened to Mary, and did exactly what Jesus told them to do. And their reward is that they are let in on the secret: that *Jesus is the one* who turned water into wine, who performed the miracle. In other words, because they were obedient, the servers came to see Jesus' true identity—that He is the Messiah, the Savior they have been waiting for. And by knowing who Jesus is, they can begin to put their faith in Him, and so be saved.

Now we've arrived at the central message of the miracle of the Wedding at Cana: Jesus is the *good* wine that God the Father, has been preparing His people for. He is the New Covenant (or "Testament") of love between God and man, making all things new. But this is just the beginning: Jesus says *my hour has not yet come*. That hour only fully comes at the Last Supper, when Jesus will fully "propose" the New Covenant in His blood through a chalice of wine. As the new People of God, we renew this Covenant with Him at every Mass. Because the grace of the New Covenant is not just for the Jews, but for all people who accept Christ's marriage proposal through faith and Baptism, and so become one with Him.

John concludes this miracle by noting *Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs at Cana in Galilee, and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him*. In other words, the purpose of the "signs" or miracles that Jesus performed, was to reveal that He is indeed the promised Messiah. And by doing so, to invite the People to put their faith in Him, and so be saved. But this is also an invitation to us: if our faith has grown weak, if the fires of love for God have cooled down in our hearts, there is always hope. God can always fill us with the fresh, new wine of His Holy Spirit, as we heard about in our 2nd reading today. We just have to ask, to believe, and to *do whatever He tells us to do*.