

Jesus' First Sign
January 16, 2022, Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
Gospel of John 2:1-12
Fr. John

Perhaps the most celebrated and well known miracle of Jesus' ministry and second only to the multiplication of the loaves and the fish, was that of changing water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana. Even people of a non-religious background sometimes refer to it when they are faced with a seemingly impossible dilemma.

One, rather light hearted interpretation, which I heard, depicts that of Joseph, Mary's husband, who may have been still alive and present at the wedding [although he is not mentioned in the scriptural account.] The story goes that he had a wonderful time at the wedding but may have imbibed a little too much after the abundance of wine was ensured. The next morning feeling the effects and being somewhat dehydrated from the intake of alcohol, he called out to Mary: 'Mary can you bring me a cup of water... **but don't send the boy!!**'

When I read about the wedding at Cana and how Jesus, along with his family and disciples accepted the invitation to attend, I feel a little closer to him. He is not the austere, sad faced and aloof figure in which many pious artworks often depict him. He enjoyed being with people and celebrating with them. In fact many of his teachings took place around banquet tables

The fact that his first miracle or... 'sign' [as the gospel of John would have it] would occur within the context of a wedding celebration shows a vital connection with the marriage covenant that symbolized the relationship of Israel and God which the Old Testament prophets [including Isaiah] often alluded to.

The second aspect was that Jesus 'saved' the wedding feast as well as embarrassment for the bride and groom from a rather disastrous ending. This was perhaps a premonition of his overall mission of saving all of humanity from its darkest self.

There is also perhaps a third point that is a little less obvious. It is the fact that hardly anyone at the time knew where the wine came from. Everyone was the beneficiary of the miracle yet few knew who was responsible. Perhaps it's a commentary of how God acts in our lives and how we are not aware or awake enough to acknowledge it.

Sometimes there is a barrier between how we see religious faith and how we view life. We almost see them and in fact live them as if they were in two different 'water-tight compartments.

To illustrate this I would like to recall a story that was originally told by the late Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, the Archbishop of Milan from 1980 to 2004.

The story has to do with an Italian couple getting married. They have an arrangement with the parish priest to have a little reception in the parish courtyard outside the church. Unfortunately, it rained and they couldn't have the reception, so they said to the priest: 'Would it be all right if we had the celebration in the church?'

Well Father wasn't very happy about having a reception in the church, but they said: 'We will eat a little cake, sing a song or two, have a little wine and then go home'. So the priest was persuaded.

But being good fun loving Italians they drank a little wine, sang a little song, then drank a little more wine and sang some more songs and within a half hour there was a great celebration going on in the church. And everyone was having a great time. It was a lot of fun and frolic. But the pastor was all tense, pacing up and down in the sacristy, all upset about the noise they were making. The young assistant priest comes in and says: 'Father I see you are quite upset.'

'Of course, I'm upset. Listen to all the noise they are making and in the House of God, for heaven's sake!'

'Well, Father they really had no place to go.'

'I know that, but do they have to make all that racket?'

'Well, said the young priest, 'we must not forget, must we Father, that Jesus himself was once present at a wedding!'

The pastor says, ' **I know Jesus was present at a wedding banquet - YOU don't have to tell me that Jesus was at a wedding banquet! But they didn't have the Blessed Sacrament there!!**'

Sometimes, we let religiosity get in the way of recognizing Jesus.