

LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL

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This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.
John 2:11



SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

19th January 2025

John 2:1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴ And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ⁶ Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. ⁹ When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." ¹¹ Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

This is the opening act of the ministry in the Fourth Gospel. As such it corresponds in some manner to the accounts we find in Mark 1:14 or Luke 4:16-30. It is a foundational tableau, which sets the scene for the unfolding of Jesus' identity and ministry in John's Gospel.

In ancient tradition, the Epiphany, Baptism and Cana were all regarded as one revelatory event.

KIND OF WRITING

This story is the Johannine reception and interpretation of chiefly nuptial imagery, taken from the Hebrew Bible and the ministry and teaching of Jesus. There are historical and even theological problems with taking the story literally:

- i. The Cana story has no corresponding miracle in the Synoptic tradition.
- ii. It does not follow the usual pattern of problem, encounter, request, word, healing, proof.
- iii. The vocabulary is entirely Johannine, with a link to the Call stories.
- iv. The role of the unnamed mother is entirely exceptional and invites reading at another level.

The gospel passage used three metaphors familiar from the Old Testament and the wider Jewish literature of the time: feast, wedding and wine.

verse 6: These enormous ritual containers stand for the Jewish faith as received and practised. It matters that they are jars precisely for Jewish rites of purification - some kind of transformation in faith is taking place.

Thought for the Day

The (extra)ordinary experience of everyday love is itself a sacrament. As such it mediates the love of God and gives us both an experience and a language by which we may speak of God, God who is love itself.

KIERAN O'MAHONY OSA — www.tarsus.ie

The emphasis on Luke in Year C is set aside this week as the beginning of Jesus' life is considered from a highly symbolic perspective, the one offered by John in his story of the Wedding Feast of Cana. As we see in the first reading today, weddings are symbolic of the relationship between God and Israel. However, the marriage between God and his people is in trouble and this is indicated by the phrase of Jesus' mother when she says 'they have no wine'. Wine is the sign of joy and celebration and this is what is missing, and all the gallons of water for the rites of purification cannot put it right. But this is precisely why Jesus has come - to make the marriage happen, to bring us to union with God. What happens at Cana is a sign that points to the whole meaning of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, a meaning that can only be discovered after his 'hour'. As the disciples contemplate the marvellous outpouring (literally!) of God's love, symbolised by the best wine, they come to believe in him - this is what is asked of us too.

SEAN GOAN—Let the Reader Understand, Year C

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. The story is a story of abundance, the abundance of the blessings God gives us. How have you been aware of the abundance of God's blessings? Let the memories lead you to prayer of thanks and praise for the times in your life when that joy and fulfilment have been very real to you.
2. The hour of Jesus had not yet come when the glory of God would be fully revealed, yet even so something of the glory of God was revealed in the sign that took place. For us also the revelation of the full glory of God lies in the future, but we do get glimpses along the way. Recall some of the signs that have revealed to you something of the glory of God, e.g., nature, art, friendship, etc.
3. Mary/Jesus. It is interesting to note that despite the apparent rebuff, Mary is the first person in the narrative to show (at the level of the action of the story) that the correct response to the presence of Jesus is to trust in him. When have you trusted in the word of Jesus like that? What relationships do you have that you can trust like that? Do you recall times when your trust was rewarded even when you had been initially disappointed?

JOHN BYRNE OSA—INTERCOM

In the story we are told that Jesus provides an extraordinary amount of wine for the celebration - 600 bottles by today's measures. The story is a significant reminder of how Jesus can transform anything, including that which has become stale, into something that brings joy and new life, inviting people to dance and celebrate.

When have you experienced great generosity? How have you been generous to others? Is there someone you can show generosity to this week - for example, with your time?

What in your life needs transformation? Ask Jesus to transform that which has gone stale into 'new wine', so that it can bring forth joy and celebration.

TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT—Go Deeper

When Jesus transforms water into wine, he places before us the key to understanding the saving transformation that he brings about and that his followers must manifest. The salvation of Jesus must be lived and presented by his followers as a feast that fulfils the potential of human feasts and has the capacity to fulfil our desire for total happiness.

To communicate the transforming power of Jesus, words do not suffice; signs are needed. To evangelise is not only to speak, preach, or teach, and it is certainly not to judge, threaten or condemn. It is necessary to reproduce with creative fidelity the signs Jesus did to bring in the joy of God by making the life of those peasants happier.

Much of the contemporary world remains indifferent to the message of the church. Our liturgical celebrations leave them bored. They need the church to demonstrate signs that touch their lives and are warm and cordial, in order to discover in Christians the capacity of Jesus to alleviate suffering and the hardships of life.

Who would want to listen to what is not presented as joyful news, especially if it is done in the name of the gospel in an authoritarian and menacing manner? Many are waiting for a Jesus who will be their strength and a stimulus for living, and who will show them a more sensible and joyful way to live.

JOSÉ A PAGOLA — Following in the Footsteps of Jesus, Year C

As always with readings from St John, we take for granted that the passage is deeply symbolical, and so we can be very creative in our interpretation. By calling Jesus' action a "sign" – the word this gospel always uses to refer to his miracles – the text invites us to see it as a living lesson leading us to understand God's saving work in Jesus.

We celebrate God's work from two points of view: as its beneficiaries, and as those called to collaborate with him in bringing it to fulfilment.

1. The miracle of Cana is the transformation of water into "the best wine". What was colourless and bland becomes colourful and sparkling, a source of joy and energy. Though we are free to apply the story to any experience of transformation, it is highly significant that the water was "meant for the ablutions that are customary among the Jews"; this is a transformation of religion, therefore – it had become bland, self-centered, focused on personal purity, now it is renewed and brings joy into the world.

It is a common theme of the gospels that Jesus' mission was to transform the religion of his time and make it more human – the sabbath is for human beings, not human beings for the sabbath.

2. The way St John tells the story, Jesus chose to work the miracles at the conclusion of a personal journey in four stages. Scholars have offered different interpretations of Jesus' journey. As always, personal experience is our most reliable guide. We can see the journey as the movement by which people of faith are led by God to enter into a new commitment, a new "hour" of grace, requiring a higher degree of self-giving.

3. Again starting with experience, we can see Mary as "the woman" – either within the human community or within each person. She is the compassionate one, sensitive to the needs of those around her, and sensitive also to the journey that Jesus must make, challenging him and yet leaving him free.

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL—Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels