

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Jan. 20, 2019

Readings: Is 62:1–5 • 1 Cor 12:4–11 • Jn 2:1–12

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Have you ever been to a wedding feast yourself, or had to organize one? There's often a lot going on beneath the surface – family interactions, wondering if the weather will mess things up, folks traveling from afar and not making it on time, all kinds of anticipation that several things might just not go as planned...

Maybe you've been married yourself. How did that "big day" go?

I was married on a very hot afternoon in a Central American country at war. There wasn't any wine to be had there. The biggest daily challenge as we lived with all manner of shortages, was getting what we needed to eat and drink. The office messenger would come back from delivering something and report, "There's eggs at the tienda two streets over," or "there's cooking oil nearby..." and we'd all scramble to give him money and bring things back! So finding enough food and drink for the guests invited to our celebration after Mass was a major undertaking. Of course, an upside was that I saved a lot of money – there was no way to buy a ring! Perhaps, like most guys, the only real miracle we experienced that day was the realization that our partner said "yes."

The Wedding Feast at Cana is the story of Jesus' first public miracle.

The church calendar presents this story during the season of Epiphany. Epiphany means "revealing" or "manifestation." I think the story of the Wedding Feast tells us several things about what God wants to reveal about his Son.

So maybe today we're being asked by the Church to reflect for a moment on who Jesus is (as revealed in this story) and who we might become, as true "followers of Jesus."

When you think about the Old Testament vision of God, the overwhelming image is of an all-powerful force, often revealed on a mountaintop or in a powerful feat of nature, like a burning bush. This is a God who helps his loyal followers defeat their foes as long as they obey His commands.

Maybe today's first reading from the prophet Isaiah was a bit different: Isaiah opens the door to a God who says we'll be called by "a new name." We'll no

longer be “forsaken” or “desolate” but rather, “a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord,” and we’ll rejoice as we would over the love of a partner in marriage.

And at Cana, this vision of a new God appears - in the middle of a wedding celebration! Here’s Jesus, a God who cares about temporal matters enough to save the groom from embarrassment, exalt his mother, and maintain the reputation of a family whose wedding planning had fallen a bit short.

I think it’s interesting that several spiritual writers suggest that most of us come to a deeper stage of our faith lives when something intriguing happens – they suggest, we go deeper after we perceive God in a new way.

Jesus at Cana invites us to know him in a new way – not through religion based on following laws and constantly worried about purification rites – but in relationship. God’s relationship with us can be as deep as (or perhaps even beyond) anything we can imagine. We’re offered a new relationship with God that is perhaps as different from that previous one as water is from wine...

So, I invite you to think about your own faith journey for a moment. When was a moment when you noticed and felt Jesus deeply in your life?

Do you think we live in miraculous times? Can the presence of Jesus in some way be for you like a loving relationship that makes everything seem “new?”

Or have we that same image of God that we’ve had from our childhood? Or perhaps has reading the Bible, listening to the Word, reflecting with others and celebrating the sacraments (perhaps even for some of us, even the sacrament of marriage) helped us understand God in a new, more profound way?

Do we think of Jesus as always “newly revealed” in our lives, or as the same-old, same-old – never-changing, never-emerging? The most challenging religious book I’ve read in years is Franciscan Sister Ilia Delio’s little book called, “The Emergent Christ.” She helped me question why I could ever conceive of God and Jesus as somehow “finished.”

Ilia Delio is fond of the work of Jesuit scientist and theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Teilhard de Chardin worried that Christianity made its followers inhuman – by demanding a series of rote doctrines devoid of life, pointing believers to a starry heaven away from this world. If our faith lives amount to mere observances and obligations, Teilhard felt we might fail to realize the soul’s immense power.

Ilia Delio challenges me to understand Christ as the source of divine love, a love that constantly evolves, grows, and continually changes and deepens.

And can we allow changes in our relationship with God to spark the growth of service to our neighbours? Christ's loving kindness in today's Gospel seems to be convincing proof that Christians are supposed to engage in our world. On this World Day for Migrants, we can be grateful to the good folks of St. Joe's Refugee Outreach Committee, which is helping 38 refugees at present (including a Syrian man who just arrived last night) and has a waiting list of 10 more. Perhaps I can't perform miracles, but like Jesus providing wine for the lives of others, we can all use our gifts to create a better world.

And perhaps this story also allows us to think of Mary and her role. Oblate Fr. Ron Rolheiser writes that "Catholics tend to adore Mary, while Protestants and Evangelicals tend to ignore her. Neither is ideal" he says. But do we turn to Mary as Jesus did? Do we show similar confidence in that love for us? I think of all the Marian shrines I've seen across Latin America – Mary never appears to a rich person. Marian devotion there is a mysticism of the poor. Think of Mary's words in the Magnificat – that longest section of a woman speaking in the entire New Testament. She was the first to hear the word of God, and a model of discipleship. Mary tells the servants at the Wedding Feast, "Do whatever he tells you."

These were the last words of Mary recorded in the New Testament.

"Do whatever he tells you."

Aren't those words meant for us, too?