

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend we hear about the wedding at Cana. This is such a beautiful passage, and there are so many different facets at which to look. There are a few things that so beautifully stand out which I will bring for reflection.

Mary's role in this story is so beautiful. She is the first disciple of Jesus – first both chronologically and in importance. She notices that the wine has run short. A few things about ancient Jewish weddings: ancient Jewish wedding celebrations were held over several days (about a week!). Also, it was the groom's responsibility to make sure there was enough wine for all his guests for that week. Wine was a staple of ancient near eastern culture, and in the Bible, wine represents *joy*. When Mary notices that the wine has run short, she approaches Jesus. She does not want the groom to be humiliated by this sudden lack (who knows if it was the sudden appearance, not just of Jesus, but also His disciples, that made the wine run short?). Her statement to Jesus is very simple **“They have no wine”** (John 2:3). She does not tell Jesus what to do, she does not explain to Him why He should help the groom, she does not go into lengthy explanations or prayers. Mary simply brings the problem to Jesus and *trusts* that He will take care of it.

This is one of the beautiful things about Mary's discipleship – she trusts Jesus completely! She models for us how we should approach Jesus. We don't need to tell God how to do His job. We can simply tell Him the problem. And trust. We also see how Mary does this for us, as well. As mother, as a great intercessor in heaven, we can go to Mary as her little children and ask her to go to Jesus with our problems. Is there anything that Jesus could refuse His mother?

John records Mary's last words in the Bible in this passage, right after Jesus' reply to Mary's request. Mary looks to the servers and says, **“Do whatever he tells you”** (John 2:5). This is the story of Mary's life as the perfect disciple; she was always obedient to God and His will. At the Annunciation, she stated what she had chosen everyday of her whole life, **“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word”** (Luke 1:38). This is her model of discipleship, and this is what she is always telling others to do: be obedient to Jesus.

What happens after the servers are obedient to Jesus? A miracle! Without Mary's direction, the servers might have looked at Jesus cross-eyed when He told them to fill the ceremonial washing jars with water. This represented 120-180 gallons of water. That's a lot of water. Even today, this would take some time to fill that much water, but remember that they didn't have a sink or a hose with which to fill the jars. They would have had to take smaller containers, walk to the town well, draw out the water, and then come back to the house to fill the jar. How long would this have taken, how many trips? I don't know, but it would have been a serious commitment of time and effort on the part of the servers. Their obedience (and sweat) bring about a great result – a superabundance of wine! The headwaiter, not knowing where it comes from, tastes it and knows that this is a better wine than they had previously. Commentators on this passage recognize that this is the “best wine”... the wine of joy is so overabundant that it will not, could not run out. By entrusting the problem to Jesus, “joy” is restored! What problems are too big for us in our lives? What problems rob us of our joy? Entrust them to Jesus – He will restore your joy... in superabundance!

It is significant that Jesus performs His first miracle at a wedding. As I have said before, the summary of the Bible is “God wants to marry us.” John shows this to us in several places. At the wedding at Cana, we see that Jesus takes over the role as bridegroom: He provides wine for the wedding. In chapter 4 of John, the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman takes place at a well, the Biblical place where a man finds his bride. Her search for love with five husbands and the current unmarried relationship is fulfilled in Jesus, as we see her leave her water jar behind (see John 4:28)... she is no longer thirsty for love, for she has found it. At the Last Supper, Jesus tells His disciples

“In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be.” (John 15:2-3)

A Jewish groom would have said this to his bride, as he prepared a place for her, by building rooms on his father's house. When the rooms were ready, then he would come back for the bride to bring her to himself. Finally, at the Crucifixion, before dying, Jesus' final words were **“It is consummated”** (John 19:30). Then a soldier opens His side and blood and water flow out (John 19:34). As when Adam slept, his side was opened for his bride to come forth (Genesis 2:21), so Jesus' Bride (the Church) comes forth when Jesus, in the sleep of death, has His side opened. The Bride is born of the sacraments of Baptism (water) and the Eucharist (blood). God wants to marry us!

May we be open to this incredible, intimate, passionate, tender love that God desires to pour upon us – you and me!