

ORDINARY 4A 2017
THE REVERENED JORDAN GREATBATCH

What a disappointing Gospel! One would think that a story about a wedding feast would give us some teaching on marriage. The teaching isn't there.

One would think that a story like this great sign of water becoming wine would tell us something about miracles. There is no explanation present.

One would think that such an unusual event might give us some moral guidance; give us something to live by. But there seems little we can apply to our daily living.

For all its disappointments the wedding at Cana still fascinates.

None of us would like to be in this predicament. To run out of wine at a joyous wedding celebration would be so embarrassing. Running out of food or drink when we entertain is a situation none of us would like to face. I'm sure we can appreciate the action of Jesus in providing for the feast.

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However Jesus seems to do this sign with some reluctance. He almost does it in a off handed manner. When Mary tells Jesus the wine has run out Jesus replies "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me?" This sounds a rather abrupt response.

Another fascinating thing about this story is the amount of wine. It's between 120 and 180 gallons. I think about 800 litres; about a bottle per person for 800 people. That's a huge amount of wine.

And then there is the way this sign is performed. It is very different from the other signs of Jesus. Usually Jesus says something, touches someone, shows compassion for someone. Here Jesus simply asks that the water pots for ablutions are filled with water. Without anything else being done or said the water is drawn out as wine.

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And then there is the question about who this sign is for. It tells us that Jesus revealed his glory to his disciples and they believed in him. The ruler of the feast didn't know the origin of the wine. The bride and groom seem to be blissfully unaware of what happens around them. Jesus only showed his glory to his few disciples.

What can we make of the strange and disappointing story? It still fascinates even though it's odd. Can we find something in it for now?

Although this gospel doesn't give us any obvious teaching on marriage, I think we need to look a little more closely at what

marriage is really about. The image of marriage occurs in the Old Testament reading too. Israel the nation is seen as God's bride. Marriage is about bringing together two parties in order to create something new. Marriage is an occasion of bringing unity. Maybe the word wedding describes it better.

4

Wedding is about hope and expectation and looking forward to a different kind of life. It is a new start in which the two parties seek to share all they have. It is a relationship in which there can be fear and uncertainty because the future is unknown. It is also a relationship in which the fears can be faced because the future is faced together.

With these images of wedding in mind we can begin to understand what's happening for us as we come to terms with Jesus at a wedding.

Wedding is about creating things new; a new relationship; a new family; a new way of living. This is exactly what Jesus did in his ministry. Jesus changed the old into something new. He changed the way people looked at the commandments. He changed people's attitudes to the way the sick were treated. He changed the way people dealt with the poor. He changed the way people looked at morals. He changed the way people looked at death.

5

Jesus life had about it the same quality as marriage. That quality is the ability to bring about something new. The new that Jesus brought was to do with the relationships between people and between people and God.

How did Jesus do this? What did he have that enabled the new to happen – the water to become wine? I believe it happened because Jesus was wedded to God. In him the wedding of the human and the divine was revealed. As the text says, "Jesus revealed his glory and his disciples believed in him."

Today's gospel invites us to ask of ourselves to what am I wedded. No not "who is my spouse?" It is rather to ask what is it in my life which brings about the things wedding makes happen? What brings about the new? What helps me create new relationships or improve old ones? What gives me the hope and expectation needed for the future?

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With whom do I share the things I have been given so that something new and creative may occur?

It is this thing called marriage, the joining together of two parties that makes the big changes in our lives. Being wedded to the divine is the secret.

At a Eucharist when the priest pours water into the wine this prayer is said. "By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share the divinity of him who shared our humanity." There is a wedding of divinity and humanity in the wine we drink. It is that divine and human life that we are to try and live.

Today we share in this communion which includes the wedding wine. It's not just that Jesus once turned water into wine. It is rather because this wine is Jesus he weds us to God. So being wedded to the divine we are also wedded to one another. And offer this hope to a world desperately in need of connection to each other, and to God.