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“Fill the jars with water” (John 2:4).

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isa 62:1-5; Ps 96; 1 Cor 12:1-4; John 2:1-11

The wedding feast at Cana is rich with themes for both scholars and preachers. It also has beautiful imagery that all believers can reflect on it with profit. It is a favorite Gospel for weddings, anniversaries and Marian devotion. Jesus begins his public ministry with a love story, an abundance of wine, a reminder to married couples that the best wine is saved for last, and a glimpse of Mary’s alertness to

need and influence over her son, Jesus.

All of these possible themes take place in the context of the fourth evangelist's focus on Jesus as fulfilling and surpassing the Jewish temple rituals, which are like water to the wine of grace he is offering. The six stone jars for purification are empty, and even when filled with 120 to 180 gallons of water can offer only limited benefit. Jesus changes the water into wine, the best wine, an extravagant sign of God's mercy. Something new and wonderful has begun.

That Jesus begins his ministry and performs his first sign at a wedding are also major themes in the fourth Gospel. The Incarnation is itself the marriage of humanity and divinity, the goal of the Covenant. Jesus is introduced as the bridegroom to Israel, the sign of God's love for his people, one of the central themes of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Mary models our faith as disciples. Her compassion for the married couple moves her to prompt Jesus to perform a spectacular miracle to save them from embarrassment. Mary's words, "They have no wine," are directed to both Jesus and to us, her constant reminder to remember the poor or anyone in need. "Do something to help them," she says, even if all we have is a cup of cold water, a few fish and some small loaves. Whenever you encounter others in need, give what you have, and God will do the rest.

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