

**Second Sunday in Ordinary Time – January 16<sup>th</sup> 2022**  
**A Reflection by Fr Sylvester O’Flynn OFM Cap., Rochestown, Cork**

**The Marriage of Heaven and Earth**

Christmas may be gone but we are still celebrating the Epiphany, that is the manifestation of the divinity of Jesus. There were three great moments of revelation. First was the adoration of the Magi and the three symbolic gifts. Next was last Sunday’s reading of the Baptism of Jesus when the voice from heaven identified Jesus as the beloved Son of God. Today we have the third epiphany, the first miracle of Jesus, at the wedding in Cana (John 2: 1-11). There “he let his glory be seen and his disciples believed in him”. The event is recalled in the Second Mystery of Light in the Rosary.

**The marriage of Heaven and Earth**

We are told that the mother of Jesus was there as well as his disciples. But we are not told the names of the bridal couple. It matters little because the real interest of the evangelist, John, is the marriage of heaven and earth, the union of God and humanity.

Before the time of Jesus, God’s relationship with the Chosen People was like the courtship before marriage, a time of preparation. In today’s First Reading, Isaiah tells of this future marriage. “No longer are you to be named ‘Forsaken’, nor your land ‘Abandoned’, but you shall be called ‘My Delight’, and your land ‘The Wedded’.

**From purification to celebration**

The old religious system is represented by the six stone jars standing there, filled with water reserved for the ritual washings which were hugely important in the old religion. Stone jars were regarded as very clean, but an exaggerated insistence on ritual cleanliness was part of

a system that left the people with hearts like the jars, made of stone. These jars numbered six, still short of seven which is always the number of fullness in John’s Gospel.

“They have no wine”, said Mary. They have a religion of laws, of purification and water, but they have lost the sense of a loving God, a God of wine and celebration. Changing this purificatory water into the wine of celebration indicated that the preparatory courtship had reached the day of marriage. The best wine was kept till the last.

Each jar could hold twenty or thirty gallons, amounting to perhaps eight hundred bottles in today’s measurement. And this, after they had scoffed what was already provided! John obviously wants the reader to take this huge number not literally but as a symbol of God’s superabundant gifts. Saint Paul, in today’s Second Reading writes, “There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done.” The gifts of the Holy Spirit are many and varied.

**Mary acts as a Mother**

The role of Mary is very significant in the story. The only other reference to her in this gospel is on Calvary. Neither at Cana nor on Calvary is she mentioned by name but as the mother of Jesus. And in each place Jesus addressed her as “Woman”. It sounds rather cold to us perhaps, but it has a richer meaning. Calling her “Mother” would have expressed their personal relationship but calling her “Woman” identifies her as the new Eve. On Calvary she is given to the Beloved Disciple: “Behold your mother”. He is not personally named either because he represents all beloved disciples.

The first hint of her universal motherhood is seen at Cana in her maternal sensitivity, aware that there are signs of anxiety among the servants. Next, we see how she addresses her son in the simple and trusting way that only a mother could. “They have no wine.” Enough said.

He replied, “Woman, why turn to me? My hour has not come yet.” The ultimate hour would come on Calvary as a prelude to the Resurrection. So confident is she in her son that she immediately directed the servants (literally the deacons), “Do whatever he tells you.” A proper devotion to Mary does not lead people away from Jesus but leads them closer to her divine son. And the first group she influenced were the apostles.

### **The first of seven signs**

“This was the first of the signs given by Jesus: it was given at Cana in Galilee. He let his glory be seen, and his disciples believed in him”. More often than not, John refers to the miracles of Jesus as signs, encouraging the reader to move on from the particular event to a wider understanding. And guess how many miracles in John? Seven, of course. And the central sign is the multiplication of the loaves of fishes in the lead up to his promise of the Eucharist, “I am the living bread come down from heaven ... and the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world (John 6:51).

After seeing the first sign at Cana, the disciples moved on to believe in Jesus. What about Mary? She showed such confidence in her approach to Jesus that we can say she believed before the miracle. She was the first believing cell in the body of disciples known as the Church. In a mother’s womb the first cell of life divides into a multitude of extraordinary varieties to form the human body. Mary is the Mother of the Church.

### **Prayer**

O God of abundant giving, the enormous amount of new wine is an indication of the multitude of your blessings.

O God of the wedding, you reach down to embrace us in intimate love. As you let your glory be seen and the disciples believed in you, may we never lack signs of your love, nor the eyes to see them. We pray for those who do not believe: that their eyes may be opened to see the signs of your presence and power in the world. May they may be drawn into the embrace of your love.

Lord, as you showed your power and divinity at a wedding, we pray for all married couples. Strengthen the bonds of those who are drifting apart. Help all families to grow in the likeness of your love. Take the water of our human efforts and transform it into the wine of divine love.

(Extract from *Come and See* by Silvester O’Flynn, on the Gospel of John, published by the Columba Press)