Saint Paul’s Homily – January 24, 2021

Jesus’ First Miracle at the Wedding at Cana in Galilee

John 2: 1-11 The Wedding at Cana

On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.”His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast.” So, they took it. When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, “Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.” This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

**MESSAGE**

**Why Was Jesus First Miracle Done for a Wedding Feast?**

* Jesus was willing to perform this miracle to inaugurate his ministry of reconciling and restoring Israel. Why then? Why this miracle? Did Jesus just decide to keep the party going, or was there something else happening?
* The important symbolism here not to be missed is this was a wedding and Jesus, the bridegroom of the church, was present. This miracle takes place in the context of a wedding celebration. By becoming the master of the celebration Jesus is foreshadowing our ultimate destiny and future: celebrating the perpetual wedding banquet with the bridegroom, who is Jesus himself.
* How do we know this? John the Baptist told us Jesus was the bridegroom of the church: “You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom; the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice; therefore, this joy of mine is now full. He must increase, but I must decrease.” (Jn 2:28-30, RSV). The Revelation describes it for us: And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure”— … And the angel said to me, ‘Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. These are true words of God.’” (Rev 19:6-8, 9)
* This was an especially important occasion for the bridegroom, who was responsible for the festivities not just to his bride, but to the families and probably the whole of a small village. They lived in a **Shame/Honor culture,** in which to fail on this occasion would have brought shame on the groom and whole family**.**
* Have you ever hosted a party where the food ran out?
* This is a story about a similar embarrassing shortage of hospitality, especially at a festive occasion like a wedding. But this is worse as the groom is going to be humiliated in his first responsibility toward his wife and new family.
* Mary sees the problem and instinctively sees the need. She speaks to Jesus. Why? What did she expect him to do about it?
* Jesus response to her can sound abrupt or even rude to our ear today, “And Jesus said to her, “O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.”
* No, Jesus was not rude, though this may sound rude to you and me today. It just wasn’t yet time for him to show himself and remember that in the Bible Jesus’ “hour” ultimately refers to his passion and death on the cross, which he certainly does not want to initiate at this early time.
* H**e was not yet ready for it to be seen who he was of for his divinity to be manifested fully. So, when we look at this story in John’s gospel, we must understand the context**. “It’s not time yet.”
* We know this is not rude, however, for several reasons:

1 The form of address “woman” was polite, not rude, and good manners, even if it may have seemed to lack some of the familiarity of a son speaking to a mother.

2 Beyond that, Jesus explained to her is lack of inclination to be involved. It was not their problem. And it was not his “hour.”

3 This brings us into whole list of instances where Jesus is careful to conceal or diminish his divinity and power before the time had come for him to be fully manifested, which does not ultimately take place until the week of his passion in Jerusalem.

* + This so-called messianic secret, how Jesus tries to keep a low profile at first, is attacked by skeptics, critics, and scholars. But it makes perfect sense. Jesus knew that if he showed himself fully too soon, the Jewish people, with their messianic expectations, would have sought to embrace him and advance him as a political and military Messiah at the wrong time and in the wrong way.
  + So, his reluctance to get involved in this situation was neither rude nor inconsiderate, but part of a carefully calculated approach to the gradual revelation of who he was and what he could do.

4 Another reason we know this was not rude or disrespectful of his mother is that **Jesus never sinned**, and to fail to honor his mother, a direct violation of the Vth commandment, would have been sinful.

5 many other versions try to soften this by changing the words to something like “dear woman,” or even “mother.” Why do people always want to do that? Why do people feel the need to remake Jesus in their image? There’s no reason to do that. Jesus can take care of himself. If we don’t like what he says, the problem is ours, not his!

* Nonetheless, Jesus quietly addressed the need after his mother encouraged the servants to listen to Jesus and do what he said. She apparently was not upset or deterred by Jesus’s response, but willing to leave it to him.
* He was compassionate but careful, and apparently did what he did as his first “sign” mainly for the benefit of his disciples who were with them, not for popular opinion. “This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.”
* Recall that at the end of John chapter 1 Jesus had drawn only Andrew, Simon Peter (brother of Andrew), Philip, Nathaniel, and most likely John, so the “the disciples” may only have been a few and this sign intended to develop and confirm their budding faith.
* So what Jesus was doing was beginning to show that he was initiating something new. He was initiating the replacement of the former hopes of Judaism with a new salvation and a new hope. He was foreshadowing the ultimate promise to those who believe in him, we will be with him in endless joy and celebration.
* The miracles Jesus performed were mainly intended to verify his deity and to show what kind of godly kingdom he was inaugurating, a kingdom of compassion, hope, judgment, and reconciliation. This miracle was a “sign” to validate him to the disciples and a foreshadowing of things to come. That’s why Jesus ultimately decided it was time to do it.
* By the way, what is a miracle? The word gets tossed around loosely. To be accurate theologically, **a miracle happens when God acts to supersede or suspend temporarily the normal laws of nature for a purpose.** God parts the Red Sea. God brings down fire to consume the altar and offering of Elijah to discredit the false pagan religion. Jesus heals a paralyzed man. Jesus restores a little girl to life. Jesus gives sight to a blind man. Jesus brings Lazarus back from death. God heals a sick person in response to prayers and petitions.
* Two things we take from this for the 22nd Century: First, we follow a God who is sovereign over all his creation and has shown himself to us through miracles, so we can trust him and be confident. Second, the day will come when all who place their trust in Jesus can be part of his never-ending celebration, a wedding party that never ends and is the best ever. BE THERE!