

JANUARY 17, 2016

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

READING 1 [IS 62:1-5](#)

RESPONSORIAL PSALM [PS 96:1-2, 2-3, 7-8, 9-10](#)

R. (3) **Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.**

READING 2 [1 COR 12:4-11](#)

GOSPEL [JN 2:1-11](#)

There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee,
and the mother of Jesus was there.
Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the
wedding.
When the wine ran short,
the mother of Jesus said to him,
“They have no wine.”
And Jesus said to her,
“Woman, how does your concern affect me?
My hour has not yet come.”
His mother said to the servers,
“Do whatever he tells you.”
Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish
ceremonial washings,
each holding twenty to thirty gallons.
Jesus told them,
“Fill the jars with water.”
So they filled them to the brim.

Then he told them,
“Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.”
So they took it.
And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had
become wine,
without knowing where it came from
— although the servers who had drawn the water
knew —,
the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him,
“Everyone serves good wine first,
and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior
one;
but you have kept the good wine until now.”
Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs at Cana in
Galilee
and so revealed his glory,
and his disciples began to believe in him.

HOMILY:

In today’s gospel, the recounting of the wedding at Cana, while the major characters are the Lord, his mother Mary, the headwaiter, and the groom, I want to focus on some other important characters: the six stone water jars.

To appreciate their important role at the wedding, the closest thing we have in our Catholic tradition is the ceremonial washing of feet on Holy Thursday, which commemorated Jesus’ ceremonial washing of his disciples at the Last Supper.

In my first year as a priest, we failed to arrange for all twelve persons who would have their feet washed at the Holy Thursday Mass. My first pastor was in the habit of asking altar servers to have their feet washed, and only nine servers showed up. “No problem,” I said, “we have three other servers for the Mass—we’ll just have them complete the required number of twelve. “No problem?” Well, actually, there was a bit of a problem. For only nine of those servers whose feet were to be washed had gotten the instruction to make sure their feet were clean ahead of the service. As the priest who washed all the feet, I can still remember washing those last three sets of feet. I’m not sure where they had been before the Mass: a barefoot trip across the Sahara Desert? In some particularly seasoned tennis shoes? Maybe just some run-of-the-mill locker room floor? Suffice it to say that the water in the basin, after the washing, was not 99-44/100 percent pure.

Pope Francis, in his recent book *The Name of God is Mercy*, focused too on these large stone jars, filled with water, that Jesus changes to good wine, to superior wine. The pope reminds us that, since these jars were, as the scriptures tell us, were used for Jewish ceremonial washings, they would have been used to wash dirty hands and feet BEFORE the meal began, so that, by the time Jesus used the water for his sacred purpose, it was water like that I described in the washing of those altar servers’ feet on Holy Thursday. The Pope said, “Jesus transforms water into wine, into the fine wine, the best wine. He does it using water from the urns that were needed for ritual purification, for the washing away of one’s spiritual impurities. The Lord does not produce the wine out of nothing, he uses the water that ‘washed away’ sins, water that contains impurities. He performs this miracle with something that to us appears impure. He transforms it, making it clear that ‘where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more,’ as Paul says in the Letter to the Romans (5:20).”

The point: the privileged place of God’s action in our lives, the God Whose Name is MERCY, is at the point where our lives are impure, sinful, and wounded.

So, with confidence, we come before the God Whose Name is Mercy, and present Him something that is perfectly suited to be transformed by his grace and mercy: our sins, our failings, those things that are impure and obscure the image of God in which we were created. When we present these imperfections, here at this altar, the God who is Mercy has in hand exactly what He needs to transform our lives into the finest of wine: rich, fruitful images of God’s glory.