

2nd Sunday, C Cycle, January 17, 2016

1st Reading: Isaiah 62:1-5 - You shall be called "My delight" & your God shall rejoice in you.

Responsorial Psalm 96 "Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations."

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 - The Spirit is given to each person for the common good.

Gospel: John 2:1-11 - Do whatever he tells you.

♪♪ May the Lord protect and defend you. May He always shield you from shame.
May you come to be in Paradise a shining name.
May you be a light for all people, may you be deserving of praise.
Strengthen them, O Lord, and keep them from all evil days. ♪♪

That song is adapted from a wedding blessing in the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*. There were probably similar blessings sung at the Jewish wedding we heard about in the Gospel today.

I was in New Jersey at a celebration of my nephew's engagement on January 2nd. He will be married legally in California in May, but Sean & Katie wanted to celebrate with their families & friends who live on the East Coast. It was a lot like a *wedding* reception.

Have you ever been at a wedding reception in Northern New Jersey? There is usually so much food & drink before the main meal that you can hardly finish the entrée.

Sr. Anna and I sang that blessing & I played the violin while both of us were standing on a boulder in the back yard of the bride's family - surrounded by a heated tent.

After the blessing, my nephew surprised his fiancée with a video of *her* family, his own parents, (my sister & bro-in-law), his sister Margaret and many friends toasting the bride-to-be and showering her with love and admiration. It was unexpected, it was excessive, it was overwhelming. It was like the *overflowing* wine in the Gospel for today.

It reminded me of how very much God loves each of us and all of us.

The first reading says about God & us what my nephew was trying to say to his bride-to-be:

"You shall be called 'My Delight,' & your land 'Espoused.'... As a young man marries a virgin, your Builder shall marry you & as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so shall your God rejoice in you."

That is how much we are loved by God!

The story of Jesus at that wedding feast in Cana proclaims the same message of love & joy. But that love is not always easy to take in. It is part of a process that begins with an admission of being in need.

When his mother says, "they have no wine," Jesus, at first, says, "How does this concern of yours affect me?" They disagree about how to respond to the situation. They reveal that it is possible to disagree and to grow in love. They show us how to come to a better solution to a problem than either person alone can achieve.

Mary trusts her son to do what God calls him to do. Then she says those wonderful words of faith to the servants, *"Do whatever he tells you."* And what happens? He does get involved. And there is enough wine for the whole village, 120-180 gallons! [do the math]

His gift was both unexpected and excessive. It was more than they needed and beyond their power to make it appear. It's a preview of coming attractions, a preview of the cross and resurrection, the "hour" that Jesus is talking about when he says, "My hour has not yet come." But it is also a sign of hope for all families - because it is a promise that Jesus chooses to be involved with our everyday life.

In the Gospel, a young couple says "yes" to each other (and to each other's families - no small thing), without knowing that they would run out of wine at their wedding celebration, and without being able to foresee the times in their married & family lives when they would be at the end of their rope, without the resources they thought they needed to get through some crisis.

When we experience days when we feel like we have nothing left, we need to remember the truth that we are loved and that God rejoices in us. We need to believe that *love will find a way*. And we need to remember that Love is the name Scripture gives to the God revealed by Jesus.

But in order to receive this love, to experience the miracle of the dirty water of our everyday lives being transformed into the wine of the life and love of Jesus within us, we need to listen and obey the words of the mother of Jesus: "Do whatever he tells you."

That's what Paul is talking about in the 2nd reading. He reminds us that God still gives gifts to us. And the gifts he gives are given not only to individuals, but to families and communities.

But they are not given for the private good of any individual or group. In fact, what Paul is saying, in the context of the whole letter to the Corinthians, is clearly: "the gifts of the Spirit are given *for the common good*." (That is the best translation of the original Greek of this letter).

What gifts have you and I been given as we walk our own paths? How does God want us to use them for the common good? I truly believe that God's gifts are enough for me, and for us, to do whatever Jesus wants us to do. I also believe that God's timing is perfect (even if God's sense of humor is sometimes suspect).

I've had that experience more times than I can count in the course of my life journey, even though sometimes I haven't realized it until after the fact. There are times when I have to use my favorite prayer, "HELP!" Sometimes I fight with God - and I have learned this lesson:

If you fight with God long enough, God wins!

When Hurricane Irene blew through Middleburgh in 2011 I had what I like to call a "*Cana Moment*." It was a time when we felt like we had run out of wine, we weren't sure how we could keep doing the ministry we had been doing since 1995. We lost most of our ministry materials & I lost most of the things that were in my house by the creek. I lived in borrowed lodging for 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ years, but the dirty water (literally 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet of water & mud) was transformed by the response of many people, congregations & groups. And now, in 2016, we are still doing the ministry God has called us to do.

On Monday we celebrate the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. He was a gift given not only to his own race, but to all Americans. The movement he embodied is not just for some people, it enriches us all. His insistence on non-violent resistance to injustice is as much needed in 2016 as it was in the 1960's.

His life and words remind us that the same problems Paul was facing still need to be confronted. Corinth was an extremely diverse place (like the U.S. today). Many of those who began to follow Christ were very gifted. But some of the people he was writing to thought their gifts made them better than others, and put down those who did not have, for instance, the gift of tongues. There was racism there as there is today.

Some of the words of ML King re-state and re-enforce what Paul wrote, *"Before it is too late, we must narrow the gaping chasm between our proclamations of peace and our lowly deeds which precipitate and perpetuate war [and racial hatred]. In a real sense, all life is interrelated. The agony of the poor impoverishes the rich; the betterment of the poor enriches the rich."*

The words of the mother of Jesus in today's Gospel story give us the wisdom we need to discern our gifts, and to decide when and how to use them. Listen to them well: Listen to them deeply, listen to them together.

"Do whatever he tells you!"

Our call & our responsibility is to trust that the Spirit of God will give us the ability to respond to the call of Christ when we hear it, and to sing this song with Mary, with Paul, with Isaiah:

♪ I say "Yes," my Lord, in all the good times, through all the bad times.

I say "Yes," my Lord to ev'ry word you speak.

Digo "Sí," Señor, en tiempos malos, en tiempos Buenos,

Digo "Sí," Señor a todo lo que hablas. ♪ (Donna Peña, 1989, GIA publications, Inc.)



A Reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians

There are different gifts but the same Spirit;
There are different ministries but the same Lord;
There are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone.
To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.
To one the Spirit gives wisdom in discourse, to another the power to express knowledge.
Through the Spirit one receives faith; by the same Spirit another is given the gift of healing,
and still another miraculous powers. Prophecy is given to one,
to another the discernment of spirits.
One receives the gift of tongues, another that of interpreting the tongues.
But it is one and the same Spirit who produces all these gifts,
distributing them to each as God wills.

The Word of the Lord

[1 Corinthians 12:4-11]

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.
Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration.
When the wine ran out, 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 servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings,
each one holding twenty to thirty gallons.
Jesus told the servants, "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 chief steward."
They did as he instructed them.

When the chief steward tasted the water - now made wine,
without knowing where it had come from,
although the servants knew, since they had drawn the water,
he called the groom over and said to him: "Everyone serves the good wine first;
then, when the guests have been drinking awhile, an inferior one.
But you have kept the good wine until now."

Jesus performed this first of his signs at Cana in Galilee.
Thus did he reveal his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

(John 2:1-11)