

Reflection on the Sunday Readings

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

A Grand Wedding

Someone at Cana knew what was important: important for the newlyweds, important for the wedding guests, important for her son and his followers, important for us. It should really come as no surprise that that someone was Mary. Mary knew that a wedding was more than waiters and wine. She recognized that this joyous celebration pointed to the grand wedding of God and humankind.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 62:1–5 RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 96:1–2, 2–3, 7–8, 9–10
SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 12:4–11 GOSPEL: John 2:1–11

Comment

From exile in Babylon, the Jews had returned to a devastated Jerusalem. The sight of the rubble that was once God's holy city cast a shadow of despair over their shining freedom. The prophet speaks to the people, assuring them that splendor and glory are bound for Jerusalem. God will reclaim Jerusalem and her people as a groom claims a bride. God will be their splendor and glory.

Paul writes to the Corinthians to remind his new converts that the many gifts God has given them are intended not only for the good of the individual recipients but for the good of all. Gifts are given to build up the *community* of the Church. Paul goes on to say that the many gifts are but manifestations of the one Spirit who is at work in the Church. Gifts must be shared.

Only John recounts the story of the wedding feast at Cana. Here, we find Jesus working his first “sign” or miracle, and working it at the request of his mother. The symbolism in this sign sets the tone for the way John will treat Jesus' signs throughout his Gospel. The enormous amount of water for ritual purification signifies the whole of Jewish cult and law. As Jesus orders the jars refilled, the water gains a different mission, namely, the water of Christian baptism. But Jesus isn't finished with it. At his word, the water becomes wine, wine that suggests the Eucharist. In the wedding feast, then, we see the revelation of the Messiah who has come to save through baptism and the Eucharist.

Reflection

In the first reading, God speaks in the language of a spouse and names Israel “Espoused” and “My Delight.” As a bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so we are told God will rejoice in the people of Israel. The image of a marriage is familiar to Israel, but it is God who first uses it in this way. The mystery of our extraordinary relationship with God is often found in our own simple everyday realities.

When ordinary water and waiters and wine stewards and mothers wait on God's action in Jesus, they come to know something about God's life among them. Today's Gospel reading gives us signs that disclose who Jesus is. They give us insight into what the wedding of God and humankind means. At Cana, Jesus made a wonderful first impression, one that has been borne out down to this day. The wedding at Cana began the disclosure of how well it goes when humanity is wed to divinity.

Like drawn water, like Israel, like Mary and the apostles, we can recognize our maker and redeemer. When God seems far away, we founder. When we are called, we spark to life and are made new. We know ourselves anew. We are God's delight. We possess new voices to sing a new song, for our life is received fresh and new. This is a great miracle, one far greater than turning water into wine.

Reflection on the Weekday Readings

MONDAY, JANUARY 18

United we stand

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity began in 1908. The dates of the week were proposed by Father Paul Wattson, co-founder of the Graymoor Franciscan Friars. Popes Pius X blessed the concept and Benedict XV encouraged its observance. Protestant leaders in the mid-1920s also proposed an annual octave of prayer for unity. In 1948, with the founding of the World Council of Churches, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity became increasingly recognized by different churches throughout the world. Take a moment today to pray that, despite our differences, Christians of various backgrounds and traditions may indeed “all be one.”

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 15:16-23; Mark 2:18-22

“One puts new wine into fresh wineskins.”

TUESDAY, JANUARY 19

Listen and speak

The theme for this second day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is from the Gospel of Luke: “You are witnesses of these things.” The word *witness* is both a noun and a verb. We are witnesses because we are Christian: We have experienced the reality of Jesus in our lives. But witnesses also speak: We are called to share our stories of faith with others. In our culture of deeply divisive language, politics, and, particularly, religion, we must actively strive to find creative ways to share our encounters with Jesus and hear the stories of other Christians. Our intention, though, begins with some reflection: How willing am I to share my faith stories with others? How willing am I to listen to theirs?

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Mark 2:23-28

“Then he said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath.’”

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20

FEAST OF FABIAN, POPE, MARTYR

The accidental pope

Can a layperson be chosen pope? It happened in the year 236, when it is said that those who had gathered to elect a new bishop of Rome saw a dove alight upon the head of Fabian, an unknown layman and farmer who happened to be visiting the city. He was at once proclaimed bishop of Rome by acclamation. Fabian made important contributions to the church, including his decision to send seven bishops to Gaul to evangelize the region we know today as France and Belgium. Be prepared for service both great and small at any time of day or night.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 17:32-33, 37, 40-51; Mark 3:1-6

“Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?”

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21

Across the great divide

While Christian unity comes to our attention each January, in the daily “culture wars” what divides people (including Christian from Christian) seems always more prominent. In the health-care debate for example, we focus on divergent views on issues rather than a common goal like securing health care and insurance for the poor or illegal immigrants. Yes, *illegal*. See what I mean? Immediately the voices of righteousness and indignation (like that of the elder son in the story of the Prodigal Son) rise—even to belligerence. What of the borderless kingship of Christ? Christ’s unconditional compassion is real only insofar as it is acted in *our* flesh. Unity among Christians will elude us as long as any of us clings to anyone or anything other than Christ.

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 18:6-9; 19:1-7; Mark 3:7-12

“Jonathan spoke well of David to his father Saul, saying to him, ‘The king should not sin against his servant David.’”

FRIDAY, JANUARY 22

Please take this call

To what will you be called this day? Will it be to reconciliation and right relationship with a friend or coworker? To lead the way on a project using your gifts and a bit of inspiration from the Spirit? To lay down your own good ideas, your plan, or perhaps even your own pride or reputation in order to help another person? To make someone smile? You may not see it coming, and you might not even realize it when it is happening, but throughout this day, indeed this and every day, you are called by God to some small or large part of bringing about the gospel of Christ Jesus. Listen, and be ready!

TODAY'S READINGS: 1 Samuel 24:3-21; Mark 3:13-19

“[Jesus] went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted.”

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Readings for next Sunday's Liturgy: January 24: Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10; Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 15; 1 Corinthians 12:12-30; Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21.