

## Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (C) January 20, 2019

(Isaiah 62:1-5; Ps. 96; 1Cor. 12:4-11; John 2:1-11;)

Our first reading today is from the Book of Isaiah. The Jewish People had been allowed to be overtaken by their enemies, because they had been unfaithful to God. They felt shamed, because they were servants in another country, their homeland was in ruins and they were not there to care for it. But Isaiah gives them hope. “No more shall people call you ‘Forsaken,’ or your land ‘Desolate,’ but you shall be called ‘My Delight,’ and your land ‘Espoused.’” For the Lord delights in you and makes your land his spouse. As a young man marries a virgin, your Builder shall marry you; and as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride so shall your God rejoice in you.” God wants to marry his people.

That reveals a God of the bible. That is a personal God, not a deist who creates the world and leaves it to fend for itself. It is not only a force of nature that moves the world or keeps it in existence, but is the Word of God. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. He embodies the marriage of God and Man – the human person and the ever-lasting God. He spoke of himself as the bridegroom. His Church is his bride. (Mk. 2:19)

It is not surprising that in John’s gospel the first miracle, called a sign, was at a wedding. The mother of Jesus was there. She may have been helping with the serving. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. For them the wedding feast was a several day event. It is Mary who brings the need of the newly married couple to Jesus. “They have no wine.” What sobering news. Wine was a staple of the people of that place and time. It was a way of preserving the grapes. The alcohol would help. But good wine also lifts the spirits.

The events recorded in the gospels, and especially in the Gospel of John, can have several layered meanings. The significance of his first sign at a wedding reflects also the creation of the human race. God says, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and

female he created them. 28 And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

The man and woman together reveal the image of God more fully. That is why the sacrament of marriage is so sacred. That and natural law reveal it as such. Even those who were not Christian have always recognized marriage as the conjugal relationship between a man and a woman. That also relates to Isaiah, that God wants to be in that relationship with his people.

Mary is concerned for this newly married couple. They, especially the groom and his family, were expected to provide for the guests for several days. To run out of wine removes an important element. It would have been a lasting embarrassment for this wedding couple to run out of wine. But notice the response of Jesus. “Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.” ‘Woman,’ is the title given to Eve, who led the first family into sin and alienation from God. Mary is the new Eve, who would bring the Word of God, the ‘source of all grace’ into the world. The new wine is the sign of the grace of God given to the world, which would lift – you might say, ‘intoxicate’ people of God with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Then Mary says her last words of the gospel - “Do whatever he tells you.” That is what all the prophets proclaim throughout the Old Testament – ‘Do what God tells you.’ Evidently through his mother the hour of Jesus does come. He immediately told them to fill the water jars – six of them, each holding 20-30 gallons. They were intended for the ritual purifications. The new wine of Jesus would replace the old rituals of the law. He tells them to fill them with water and they fill them to the brim. God never does anything halfway. At his instructions they take some to the headwaiter, who calls the bridegroom over and comments that he has kept the best wine until now. The wine of Jesus – the gift of the Holy Spirit, the grace of God, is the best of gifts given to this newly married couple and

to each of us in the sacrament of Baptism, Confirmation and here in the Eucharist. It is the good wine of each of the sacraments, including marriage in the Church.

But why does Jesus hesitate? Everything Jesus says and does in the gospel is for our salvation. He wants us to know that he respects his mother's request. He wants us to respect her requests and to know that she is a powerful intercessor to Jesus for us.

The last act of Jesus on the cross in this same gospel involves Mary and us. This gospel is the only one to reveal that one of the disciples did not stay away in fear but was with Mary at the foot of the cross. The author refers to him as the "Beloved Disciple." We believe it was the author of this gospel or at least one of his disciples. "When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home." (Jn. 19:26-27)

We, who follow Jesus, are his beloved disciples. He was giving her to us as our mother. It was through his mother that he recognized his hour had come. It is through a close relationship with her that we can recognize God and his call for us.

Our second reading from first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians tells us, "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone."

This week we remember the anniversary of Roe vs. Wade., when the Supreme Court declared a right to abortion. Thousands of Catholics are walking on the streets of Washington D.C. to silently protest that decision which has violated God's greatest creation given through the union of man and woman – the taking of an innocent child's life.

I have been getting a publication from the Population Research Institute. Its founder was Steven Mosher together with Fr. Paul Marx. Steven was not raised Catholic. He studied at Sanford University. "In 1979, Steven was the first American social scientist to visit mainland China. He was invited there by the Chinese government, where

he had access to government documents and actually witnessed women being forced to have abortions under the new “one-child policy.” Mr. Mosher was a pro-choice atheist at the time, but witnessing these traumatic abortions led him to reconsider his convictions and to eventually become a practicing, pro-life Roman Catholic.” (PRI website)

His articles witness to the people, the organizations and situations which lead to abortion throughout the world and that most countries, especially the developed western nations would be losing population, if it wasn't for the hispanics in this country and the muslims in Europe.

Abortion takes one life – the child, and wounds the life of another - the mother and the family and all who would have connected with that child throughout his or her life. As St. Paul says we are each given gifts by God through the Holy Spirit. Even from our womb, as the prophets testified, God knows us and has a purpose for each and every person.

In the last publication from Population Research Review Steven Mosher was promoting a new book entitled “Unrepeatable: Cultivating the Unique Calling of Every Person.” He says it is a book that will help you know and love others by recognizing and helping them develop their special, unique essence – an essence that bears the fingerprints of God. (Review, Nov.-Dec. 2018)

May God bless you that you may know and love the uniqueness of yourself and all of God's children with whom you come in contact.