

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – C; Jan. 19th 2025
Is. 62: 1-5; 1Cor. 12: 4-11; Jn. 2: 1-11

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

The bride and bridegroom imagery is very prevalent in the entire Bible. For instance, the first Book of the Bible, the Book of Genesis, opens with the narration of the creation of the first human pair and the institution of marriage. We read in Genesis 2: 24, **“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body.”** The last Book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, concludes with the wedding ceremony of the Lamb. **“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory. For the wedding day of the Lamb has come, his bride has made herself ready.”** (Rev. 19: 7).

This same imagery is used by the Prophets of different ages to show the intense love of God for Israel. In today’s first reading we see Isaiah presenting God to be the bridegroom of the people of Israel. **He says, “For the Lord delights in you and makes your land his spouse.”** If we take all these wedding imageries in totality, one thing is very clear that God considers the marital union as the most sacred one and the marital love as the purest and deepest one in the world. Coming to the New Testament, we see the continuation of the bride and bridegroom imagery in the words and parables of Jesus. There are parables where Jesus compares the Kingdom of Heaven with a wedding feast. At one occasion Jesus considers himself to be the bridegroom and his disciples the friends of the groom. St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians calls Jesus the bridegroom and the Church his bride.

According to John the miracle at Cana where Jesus converted water into wine is the first miracle of the seven miracles described in his gospel. This particular miracle is unique in many ways. First of all, only in John’s gospel we see this miracle. Secondly, this is the only miracle Jesus performs to save a couple from public shame as well as for their material benefit. Thirdly, this is the only miracle where Mary plays the role as an initiator or mediator. John says that both Mary and Jesus with his disciples were invitees to the wedding. Finally, the presence of Jesus at the wedding party shows that he was not a gloomy rabbi like the Jewish rabbis who isolated themselves from the social gatherings. Wine was the only drink served at a wedding and it was the duty of the groom’s party to reserve enough wine for the guests and the failure would invite staunch criticism from the guests and even they would walk out of the party. Such an incident would be a public humiliation for the couple. So by this miracle Jesus saved an awkward situation and kept alive the joy of the couple and the celebration.

This miracle is the vivid example of the great sensitivity and concern of Mary and Jesus to the married couples. First of all, Mary sensed the great embarrassment of the groom and his parents. So without any delay she approached Jesus for help. Though Mary has not seen Jesus working any miracle before, she knew the power of her son. The words of Mary, "*They have no wine*" are the clear indication of Mary's sensitivity and concern for the crisis of the married couples. Initially Jesus seems to be reluctant to do something. But he respects the request of his mother and he too knew how bad the crisis of the groom's party was. From the first century on Mary is considered to be a powerful mediator between Jesus and the Christians.

This miracle is very encouraging, especially, for all the married couples; not because Jesus will be coming to make wine for them on weekly basis. Please try to recall the day of your wedding and the first few years of your life together. Some of you have to go back years and others may have to go back only a few years. No matter how long you are married, you will never forget your wedding day and the first few romantic years you have spent together. You entered into the marital union with full of love, romance, emotions and dreams. But many of you started feeling that the *wine* of your love, emotion, patience and endurance running out as years go by. You experience that more and more the differences and disagreement coming up, more than the agreement and common ground. But if Mary and Jesus are the invited guests in your family life, no doubt, the wine will not run out in your life. In other words, you will be able to have a wonderful married and family life.

Unfortunately, these days many couples consider the Church wedding as only a ritual. Many choose the Church for wedding because their parents insist for it. After making the vows when they leave the Church, they leave Jesus and Mary there itself and try to build up a family life by themselves. Soon they feel that the *wine* is running out and don't know where to turn for help. So please keep Jesus and Mary as your guests in the family. I make a simple request to the couples, please spend some time daily to pray together and if you have young children, let them also pray with you. This alone will bring abundance of grace in your family.