

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**January 16-17, 2010**  
**St. John the Evangelist Parish**  
**Deacon James J. Benjamin**

*Isaiah 62: 1-5 Psalm 96 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11 John 2: 1-11*

John tells us that this story about the wedding at Cana  
is the first of the signs that Jesus performed.  
He doesn't call it a miracle, but a sign.  
We know what signs are;  
they point the way for us.

We're on I 95 and the sign says, "10 miles to Baltimore"  
or we're trying to find our way out of an unfamiliar building,  
and we come upon a sign saying, "exit."  
Or, perhaps my wife's favorite sign: "Restrooms," with an arrow pointing the way.

So this story is a sign for us,  
but what does it point to?  
That is what I would like to reflect upon today.  
How can you and I listen to this wonderful story  
in a way that shows us the deeper meaning that it indicates?

First, let's consider the story itself.  
Jesus and his mother and some disciples are attending a wedding,  
presumably friends of the family, though we aren't given any names.  
It appears that this family hasn't planned very well  
for the crowd that will show up since they run out of wine early.  
Any of us who has planned an event like this shudders at the thought  
of running out of something as basic as food or drink at a big party!

And so there must be a kind of quiet panic that is infecting the family members  
when Mary, who must have been sensitive to these vibes,  
simply remarks to Jesus, "they're out of wine."  
Nothing more, no anxiety, no pleading with him to do something.  
She just tells him what the need is and trusts him.  
Mary clearly knows what his capabilities are,  
and she knows also that Jesus must love this family every bit as much as she does.  
It doesn't look either like she is put off by his comment to her  
that sounds, to our ears, almost cold or uninterested.  
Experts tell us that calling her "woman" would have been  
a normal form of address, even respectful,  
but to us it sounds like he's just being dismissive.

But Mary knows better,

telling the staff to do whatever Jesus tells them.  
She might even have expected that he might do something quite unusual  
and she wants to make sure the staff cooperates with him.  
After all they don't know Jesus yet,  
for this is his first sign in the community;  
his first public manifestation of God's power and glory alive in him.  
Probably Mary wouldn't have had to say anything  
if the wedding had happened six months in the future,  
for by then everyone would have heard of the marvels he was accomplishing.

One of the directions, then, in which this sign is pointing is toward God.  
All power is from Him.

And so the miracle happens and the wedding celebration goes on, into the night.

Now let's look at some details about this story.  
They will provide some background as to why this story  
was so important for John to include in his Gospel.  
First, if you read the passage in your bible, you'll note that it begins,  
“On the third day there was a wedding feast...”  
Our reading omits that first phrase about the third day,  
but it's important to remember it.  
John is calling our attention to the third day after Jesus dies on the cross,  
and how the hopes and dreams of his disciples,  
that had been dashed by his execution,  
are restored to joy and exultation when they witness his resurrection.

On the third day God's power and glory is manifested  
in the resurrection of his Son.  
It is the cornerstone and bedrock of our faith.

In today's Gospel we witness the first public sign of God's Son,  
bringing about a wonderful ending to a wedding story,  
but reminding us of another wonderful ending to what had seemed to be a tragic story.  
But that ending was not an ending at all,  
but rather a beginning of new life for all of us, for all time,  
in our eternal home.  
The sign today, at a deep level,  
points to our fulfillment, our total transformation by joy,  
because of what Jesus does for us.

Back to the story:  
we're told of six water jars, meant for the ritual washing for the guests.  
The number six, one less than the number seven, symbolizing perfection.  
It is no accident that John reports just seven signs  
that Jesus performs in his entire Gospel.

Seven is totality, seven is complete;  
seven signs are enough to tell his readers that Jesus is God's son  
and Jesus reveals his Father's love for each of them.  
The six water jars point toward seven,  
perfect fulfillment of God's saving plan in Jesus.

John is telling us that the culmination of Jesus' signs,  
that perfect accomplishment of God's will,  
is going to happen at the resurrection.  
This story of the wedding feast,  
Jesus' first sign, an act of obedience toward his mother,  
points to Jesus' final action of obedience to his Father.  
As a result of the resurrection God's kingdom is then opened for all;  
the heavenly wedding feast begins,  
and wine again flows in great abundance.

Mary, who brings the need of this family to her son:  
"Son, they have no wine,"  
will bring our needs to her son as well.  
What is it that we lack?  
Is it security?  
We don't have enough money,  
or our job isn't secure,  
or perhaps our relationship with our spouse or a child is a bit rocky?  
Mary will bring our need to Jesus and he will respond.

Do we lack a sense of self-esteem?  
We don't feel worthy of love,  
or we seem to care too much what others say about us,  
or we think that perhaps we've committed sins that can't be forgiven?  
Mary will definitely bring our need to Jesus,  
and his forgiveness will fill us.

What else do we lack?  
Friendship? Satisfying work?  
Peace of mind? A strong faith?  
A feeling of aliveness and engagement in our lives?  
Bring all these to Mary  
and she will say, "Son, they lack these things.  
They're feeling alone; they're feeling cut off from their family;  
they're worried about the future;  
they're uncertain about their health;  
they feel sick and confused."

She'll take these things to her son  
and she'll trust him to bring his healing power everywhere it's needed.

And then she says to us,  
“Do whatever he tells you.”  
Then it is our job to listen well to the Holy Spirit of Jesus.  
We will find out what we must do.  
Perhaps we must just wait in confidence,  
allowing ourselves to be transformed by love  
so that we become more patient and more trusting.  
Maybe we will have the inspiration to forgive someone  
and that may not be easy,  
especially if the resentment has been there for awhile.  
Perhaps it is time for us to take better care of our bodies,  
to take more responsibility for our health.  
This, too, may not be easy  
and may mean changing some habits we’ve had for a long time.

The sign points to Jesus who has the response to our needs.  
Can we do like Mary did and allow him to work in our lives?  
Can we be more patient,  
more trusting, more forgiving, more prayerful?  
Can you and I allow Jesus to fill up what is lacking in our lives,  
as he filled up the six water jars with the most delicious wine?

The sign leads to Jesus;  
may God give us the grace to follow the sign,  
trusting that even now he is filling us with his grace. Amen.