

My Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I can't help it. Every time I read this miracle at Cana, I always think of the same, tired old joke. You've probably all heard it, but I'll tell it anyway.

Father O'Neill (the priest in the joke is always Irish for some reason) was driving erratically on the 30 bypass. It wasn't long before there were twirling red lights in his rear view mirror. Dutifully, Father O'Neill pulled to the side of the road. A State trooper approached and asked to see his license and owner's card. Fr. O'Neill replied, "Ah, surely, Laddie". The trooper asked, "Father, were you drinking?" "Indeed," the priest said, "but just a bit of water". The trooper says, "Mmm, it smells like wine to me." To which Fr. O'Neill shouts, "Glory be to God! He did it again! Turned the water into wine!"

The miracle at Cana wasn't a joke, but I can't help but wonder, "Why?" All of Christ's other miracles were healings of those who were sick or disabled in some fashion, even to raising the dead to life. It's easily seen how these gave glory to God and manifested Jesus' divine power. But, this turning water into wine next to those that are more dramatic seems kind of frivolous, don't you think?

However, as we break open this Scripture, there really is a lot to discover. First of all, it offers us a rather intimate view of the relationship between Jesus and Mary, as well as their relationships with us. It also reveals the kind of relationship that God wants with us.

First of all, Mary notices that the bridal couple had run out of wine. In the time of the Lord, this wasn't just an embarrassment, it was a catastrophe. The wedding feast was a week-long celebration that the bride and groom and their families provided food and drink for all the guests, which would have include the whole town, along with their extended families. There are reportedly records from that time that indicate families were sued for running out of food or wine on such occasions.

Believe it or not such customs endure even to this day. Some years ago, while studying in Africa, my nephew, John, fell in love with and wanted to marry a young girl from Togo. She happened to be the daughter of a tribal chief in the southern part of the country. Amina's father told John he could marry his daughter when he was prepared to provide the feast for the wedding that would include not just the southern tribe, but the northern tribe as well. John returned home and worked three years to raise the money for the wedding feast which meant that he had to buy a whole herd of goats to feed basically the entire nation of Togo for a week. He did it. The marriage took place. John and Amina came back to the U.S. and produced a beautiful young woman, named Sophia, who will graduate from Penn State this year.

So, back in Cana, we see Mary taking note of the predicament of the bridal couple, without anyone saying a word to her. Such was her concern for this young couple. So she turns to Jesus and says, “They have no wine.” She doesn’t tell him what to do. She doesn’t get all excited. Quietly, she simply says, “They have no wine.”

Jesus obviously knows that she expects him to do something about it, but apparently doesn’t think he’s ready to address the need. He responds, “Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.”

What I find fascinating in this exchange is Mary’s response. She doesn’t even address Jesus. It appears she even turns away from him and speaks directly to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Theologically, this makes perfect sense. Remember that Mary conceived Jesus in her womb when the Holy Spirit came upon her. I believe the Spirit in her was roused to speak to that same Spirit in Jesus to make him aware that indeed his time had come—his time to glorify God. Also, as a Jewish mother, she knew that no son of her’s would dare not to do what she wanted.

That’s so important for us to recognize. That’s why we Catholics have such devotion to Mary. We know that when she intercedes with Christ on our behalf, there is nothing that He won’t do for his Mother.

So Jesus tells the servants to fill the ceremonial jars that had been used by the guests to wash before the meal was served. The jars were hugh. They held, according to John, who was surely among the guests, 20 to 30 gallons. There were six of them. Jesus tells the servants to fill them with fresh water. Now there was 120 to 180 gallons of water. Jesus told them, “Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.”

The headwaiter is astounded. He rushes to the bridegroom and compliments him, saying, “Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now.”

John, the beloved disciple sums up the event, “Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs at Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.” I suspect this is a really personal testimony on the part of John. It was at this wedding feast in Cana when John began to believe in Jesus.

I suspect that was God’s intent in stirring up his spirit in Mary to unleash the spirit in Jesus—to draw disciples to Jesus.

And I suspect that is how God works in our lives as well. In the common, everyday occurrences in our lives, God motivates the spirit in another in our lives to unleash his spirit in us to do the work he wants us to do that he may be glorified in us. That's why He gave us life. That's why He called us to be baptized in Christ Jesus. That's why He comes to us here today (night) to receive Jesus into our very being. So that He might be glorified in us.

Also, we have to be moved by the compassion of Mary toward this bridal couple that stirred up the spirit within her to enlist Jesus on their behalf. Know that it is with that same compassion with which Mary looks upon us, whom Jesus made her sons and daughters, as He gazed upon her from the cross on Calvary. She is always ready to intercede on our behalf. There is no need that we'll ever have that she won't bring to the attention of Jesus. That's why we revere her as Our Lady of Consolation.