

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

Two weeks ago we celebrated the coming of the Magi who followed the star. Last week was the Baptism of Jesus marked by the voice of the Father and the appearance of the dove. Today is the wedding at Cana, which is the third of the “manifestations” associated with the Epiphany celebrated in the traditional liturgy of the Church and which mark the beginning of Christ’s divine mission on earth.¹⁹

Isaiah 62:1-5

Babylon (the old name for the nation of Iraq) destroyed the city and its citizens were force-marched into exile. The temple was destroyed. This reading is one long exalted promise of the restoration of Israel after the exile.¹

1For Zion’s sake I will not be silent, The prophet is speaking for God so the personal pronouns refer to God, not the prophet!¹ The names Zion and Jerusalem are interchangeable. The city of Jerusalem is built upon Mount Zion while the Temple is on Mount Moriah.¹⁷ **for Jerusalem’s** Both Zion and Jerusalem refer to the people of God, the intended bride of the Eternal One.¹ **sake I will not be quiet, until her vindication shines forth like the dawn and her victory like a burning torch.** So long as God was silent, Zion was desolate; but now that God is about to speak, her vindication shines with the suddenness of the desert dawn.³ God is eager to restore the beloved to her rightful place both in the world and in relationship to her divine spouse.¹

2Nations shall behold your vindication, and all the kings your glory; you shall be called by a new name pronounced by the mouth of the Lord.

3You shall be a glorious crown in the hand of the Lord, a royal diadem held by your God.

These images are used to indicate the bride’s beauty and privilege.¹ There may also be a reference here to an ancient practice whereby a king’s crown was fashioned as a miniature of his city’s walls.³ Yahweh holds His crown in His hands because Jerusalem is His possession.¹⁷

4No more shall people call you “Forsaken,” or your land “Desolate,” When the covenant with Yahweh is violated, the curses are called down upon the people (Leviticus 26:21-22; 2 Chronicles 24:20).¹⁷ **but you shall be called “My Delight,” and your land “Espoused.”** The promises of Hosea 2:18-20 are not forgotten, even though Israel has had adulterous relationships with Baals.¹⁷ New names in scripture usually express a new vocation or status. When names, like any other word, are pronounced by God, they effectively achieve exactly what they say.¹⁸ **For the Lord delights in you and makes your land his spouse.** This intimate marital imagery between God and the people exists in earlier literature and Hosea makes of himself a living prophecy when he takes a prostitute as a wife to symbolize Israel’s infidelity to God. But this understanding of Israel as bride and God as groom is not just a symbolic device or pretty image, for it expresses in the only language available this side of heaven the reality of our relationship with God in the Church. Paul comments on this in Ephesians 5:32 when he refers to marriage as a foreshadowing of the great mystery of the relationship of Christ and the Church.⁵

5As a young man marries a virgin, Zion has been an adulterous nation but she is now like a virgin, she is so forgiven.³ **your Builder shall marry you; and as a bridegroom** “Young man,” “builder,” and “bridegroom” are all roles played by the Lord in this expression of relationship with the chosen people.¹ **rejoices in his bride so shall your God rejoice in you.** Few passages in the Bible equal this one as a statement of the degree and kind of love that motivates God toward earth.¹

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Corinth was the perfect spot for evangelization because the town had a command of the trade route on the neck of land on the Achaian peninsula that divided the Aegean and Adriatic Seas. The Church there had influence well beyond its immediate vicinity. As a port town, it possessed a very diverse population of peoples and factualism became a problem in the Corinthian Church.⁵

The Christians at Corinth were in competition with one another over whose gift was the most worthy. The gift of tongues was held to be a gift of particular value. Paul sets out to teach the community that the gift is less important than the giver and the purpose for which the Holy Spirit gives the gift.¹

Brothers and sisters:

4There are different kinds of spiritual gifts Paul is speaking here of the charismatic gifts. These are special abilities, inspirations or particular powers which God gives to a person so that he can perform a certain task for the renewal and building up of the whole Church.¹⁰ **but the same Spirit;** The “gifts” are attributed to the Holy Spirit who is himself THE GIFT sent by the Lord Jesus and the Father.³

5there are different forms of service but the same Lord; These “ministries” or “services” are attributed to the Lord Jesus who was sent as the Son in the Incarnation to minister and to serve.³

6there are different workings These “workings” or “activities” or “operations” are the gifts that are attributed to God the Father who is the source of all being and activity.³ **but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.** All the gifts come from the one divine source and are directed to the one aim of promoting the well-being of the Church.³

7To each individual the manifestation of the spirit is given for some benefit. The gifts are not given for the pride of the recipient but for the service of the community. They are to be used for the common good, for the building up of the church.¹¹ These gifts are given for the good of the community, and not for the private good of the receiver’s soul. All are important. None is unimportant. All are needed for a thriving community. None can be dismissed as insignificant. The relative value of the various gifts is to be estimated by their usefulness to the Church. The gift is given to the Church but God gives it through a particular individual.¹ Paul apparently considers that a baptized person who would not have received some manifest gift of the Spirit to be an exception. The normal Christian life is charismatic.¹⁰

8To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; This means seeing things as God sees them, not as the world sees them.⁸ It makes the Christian docile to the movement of the Holy Spirit and makes him familiar with divine standards.⁽⁶⁾ **to another, the expression of knowledge according to the same spirit;** This refers to the ability to understand a truth of the mystery of Christ.⁷

9to another, faith by the same Spirit; The other spiritual gifts depend on faith.⁷ This is not the gift of saving faith possessed by all Christians, but an extraordinary trust in God that encourages others who witness it.⁹ It produces extra-ordinary results like in Mark 11:23 when Christ speaks of moving a mountain through faith.³ **to another, gifts of healing by the one spirit;** Healing and mighty deeds call attention to the reality of God in our lives.

10to another, mighty deeds; These are miracles that change the course of nature such as walking on water, multiplying food or money, calming the storm, disappearing, going through walls, catching 153 fish at one time, raising the dead, praying for or against rain, or traveling miles in a moment. The Lord created all things and all things are subject to him. **to another, prophecy;** In chapter 14 Paul recommends that they should set their hearts on spiritual gifts,

above all, the gift of prophecy which is to speak to men for their upbuilding, their encouragement, and their consolation. **to another, discernment of spirits;** Satan tries to counterfeit God's gifts and with this discernment one can tell if the gift is a genuine gift of God or a work of Satan or simply a message from the speaker's own human spirit. This gift becomes increasingly more important as we near the end of the world. Jesus prophesied: "False messiahs and false prophets will appear performing signs and wonders to mislead, if it were possible, even the chosen" (Mark 13:22). We are also told that there will be a mass apostasy before Jesus' final coming (2 Thes. 2:3). The gift of discernment will prove invaluable in helping us remain faithful to the Lord, no matter what.⁷ **to another, varieties of tongues;** This is the supernatural gift of praying in a language unknown to us and it is God's way of extending our means of communicating with Him. There seem to be two forms of this gift: one form is speaking only to ourselves and God. This requires no interpretation and is probably given to everyone who is open to receive it. The other form of tongues is for the benefit of the community. This should be spoken by one person at a time and should be interpreted.⁷ **to another interpretation of tongues.** While tongues are the language of the spirit at prayer, they are not comprehensible to another unless someone can interpret them. It may include some revelation, or knowledge, or prophecy, or instruction.⁷

11But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, This is an incomplete list for there are some thirty gifts mentioned in the bible and the Lord commands us to seek them by prayer, bible study, and use in ministry.⁷ **distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.** Charisms are not exempt from the discernment of the Church's shepherds who are not to extinguish the Spirit but to test all things and hold fast to what is good so that all the diverse and complementary charisms work together for the common good.² (CCC 801) One who possesses a gift and does not share it not only deprives themselves of its benefits, they deprive the entire community and the gift is lost.¹⁷ The gifts are not given for the pride of the recipient but for the service of the community.¹¹

John 2:1-11

In today's reading, Jesus, through Mary's intercession, performs his first miracle beginning his public ministry. This is also where the resounding Marian words are spoken that continue to echo today: "Do whatever he tells you." This reading forms the basis for the second luminous mystery of the rosary.

1There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, Jewish weddings, like this one five miles north of Nazareth, could be celebrated for an entire week or more. The young couple is never identified.⁵ Jesus sanctifies the covenant of marriage by his presence at this wedding and the Church sees it not only as a confirmation of the goodness of marriage but she also proclaims that henceforth marriage will be an efficacious sign of Christ's presence.² (CCC 1613) **and the mother of Jesus was there.** The failure to mention St. Joseph leads us to believe that he has already died.¹⁶

2Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. Christ's presence at the wedding is a sign that he blesses love between man and woman joined in marriage. God instituted marriage at the beginning of creation; Jesus confirmed it and raised it to the dignity of a Sacrament.¹⁶

3When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." This was an embarrassing predicament for the young couple and it broke the strong, unwritten laws of hospitality of the area. Mary's concern for the situation may suggest she is a relative of the wedding party.¹² Vatican II affirms the appropriateness of the titles: "Advocate," "Helper,"

Benefactress,” and “Mediatrix” for the Mother of Jesus.² (CCC 969) This means that just as Mary intervened at Cana for the needs of others, so she continues to make heavenly intercession for all who call on her.¹² Pope John Paul II explains how this scene at Cana reveals Mary’s role as Mediatrix: Thus there is a mediation: Mary places herself between her Son and mankind in the reality of their wants, needs and sufferings. She puts herself “in the middle”, that is to say she acts as a mediatrix not as an outsider, but in her position as mother.¹³ Note that Mary prays the problem. She does not tell Jesus what to do about it.

4And Jesus said to her, “Woman, This was a title of respect and endearment in antiquity. Genesis 3 is the reverse image of the Cana episode for as Eve prompted Adam to defy the Lord and drag the human family into sin, here Mary prompts Jesus, the new Adam, to initiate his mission of salvation. The description of Mary even alludes to Gen 3:15 where Yahweh speaks of a “woman” whose son will trample the devil underfoot.¹² We should also look at the “woman” in Rev. 12 who is simultaneously the mother of Christ and of the New Israel. Jesus not only calls his mother “woman” in this selection but also at the cross in John 19:26 when Jesus says to Mary, his mother: “Woman, there is your son.” Remember that John thought about these things for many years before he wrote this fourth gospel. The word “woman” is the link that he uses. If we compare Cana with the scene of the crucifixion we should note their similarities for these are the only two times that we see the adult Jesus speaking to Mary. In both circumstances he calls her “woman” and the hour is mentioned. Both actions take place at the time of the Passover.⁵ These are the two times when Jesus’ human nature seemed reluctant to take on the burden of suffering. His Mother called him to his public life. His Father called him to his public death. Obedience triumphed in both cases.¹⁵ **how does your concern affect me? My hour** This refers not only to the SACRIFICIAL time of Christ’s passion but also to the SACRAMENTAL gift of Christ to us in the liturgy where he expects to provide an abundance of the finest wine for believers all over the world who will gather to worship Christ as he pours himself into the Eucharistic cup under the visible sign of wine.¹² **has not yet come.”**

5His mother said to the servers, “Do whatever he tells you.” Mary never wavers in her confidence that Jesus will respond favorably to her petition. These final words of Mary in the New Testament ring out as her spiritual testament for all time, for all disciples of Jesus.¹²

6Now there were six stone water jars Together they held between 120 and 180 gallons. **there for Jewish ceremonial washings,** Jewish custom demanded ceremonial washings before and after eating. John alludes to this ritual to let us see the first of many ways that Jesus changed the institutions of Judaism.³ **each holding twenty to thirty gallons.**

7Jesus told them, “Fill the jars with water.” So they filled them to the brim. The jars contained nothing but water. Note that his word alone suffices to effect the change.

8Then he told them, “Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.” So they took it. The poet Richard Crashaw wrote of the moment: “The conscious water saw its God and blushed.”¹⁵

9And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, This suggests that the old covenant between heaven and earth will be changed into something entirely new. This first sign performed by Jesus recalls the first sign performed by Moses where in the first plague the water in the river was changed into blood. Note that wine is called the “blood” of the grape in Hebrew poetry (Gen 49:11 and Deut 32:14).¹² **without knowing where it came from —although the servers who had drawn the water knew—the headwaiter called the bridegroom**

10and said to him, Testimony is given to the excellence of the new wine by one who is ignorant of its origin and therefore subject to no suggestion. “Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; The inferior wine had been the prophets, judges and kings, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Josue, etc. but Jesus was the best wine.¹⁵ but you have kept the good wine until now.” This is a biblical symbol that has many associations: 1. An abundance of wine is a sign of the messianic age.(Is. 25:6) 2. It signifies the joys of marital love in the Song of Songs 1:2, 4:10 and 7:10. 3. The transformation of water into wine anticipates the transubstantiation of wine into blood when Jesus gives himself to the world in the Eucharistic liturgy. 4. The wine of the marital celebration looks beyond this life to the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven.(Rev. 19:7-9) What Christ has done in those dirty purification jars he wishes to do in each of us: cleanse us of our sins and transform us into “good wine.”¹⁴

11Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs John record seven signs of Jesus which are miracles that unveil the glory and power of God working through Christ.³ at Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him. This is the reason for telling the story. It is one of the three events that mark the manifestation or epiphany of Jesus starting his divine mission on earth. There is the star that leads the Magi to the infant Christ, the baptism of Jesus by John in the river Jordan and now the water is changed into wine at the wedding feast at Cana.¹

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) “Workbook for lectors and gospel readers” by Aelred R. Rossier, (2) “Catechism of the Catholic Church,” (3) “The Jerome Biblical Commentary,” (4) “The Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study” by Deacon Ken and Marie Finn, (5) Commentary Notes of Sean Innerst and Tim Gray, (6) “Responding To God” by the Dominicans of the Central Province of St. Albert the Great, (7) “Seek The Gifts Of The Spirit” published by Presentation Ministries, (8) “Catholic Replies” by James J. Drummey, (9) “Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The First and Second Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians” With Introduction, Commentary, Notes and Study Questions by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (10) “Christian Initiation And Baptism In The Holy Spirit” by Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, (11) “Workbook for lectors and gospel readers” by Lawrence E. Mick, (12) “Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of John” With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (13) Encyclical Letter: “Redemptoris Mater” by Pope John Paul II, (14) “The New Rosary In Scripture” by Edward Sri, (15) “Life of Christ” by Fulton J. Sheen, PH.D., D.D., (16) “The Navarre Bible: St. John”, (17) St. Charles Borromeo Scripture Study online, (18) “The Book Of Isaiah Chapters 40-66” by Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., and (19) “A Celebrants Guide to the New Sacramentary Cycle C” by Kevin W. Irwin.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.