homilycanadelight2ndsunordtime2019

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First, a couple of the asides. Today is the world day of migrants and refugees. Given that the Holy Family were migrants, refugees, displaced persons, it is good for us to mark this day. Today is also the beginning of the week of prayer for Christian unity. A time to lament the scandal of the fragmented brokenness of the Body of Christ, and to pray for the unity of all the Baptized.

Our gospel today tells the story of the wedding feast at Cana. Strictly speaking this is an extended part of the threefold feast of Epiphany. There are three manifestations or unveilings of the identity of Jesus that are associated with Epiphany. First of all, with the visit of the wise men, and the extension of God’s covenant love to include all of humanity. But Epiphany is also traditionally associated with the celebration of the Baptism of our Lord and the Wedding Feast at Cana. All three feasts together unveil for us the glory of Jesus and manifest his person and mission.

Even on its surface this story of the wedding feast is quite amazing. The text goes out of its way to mention that ‘the Mother of Jesus was there‘. Jesus and his disciples were also invited. It doesn’t tell us very much about the actual wedding. The bride groom is briefly mentioned, the bride doesn’t even show up in the story. The drama of the feast centres around the fact that they run out of wine. Always a downer at a party. Mary is the only one who seems to notice this, and tells Jesus about it. His reaction seems unusual. ‘What is that got to do with us, my hour has not yet come‘. This response doesn’t seem to deter Mary. She simply turns to the servants and says, ‘do whatever he tells you’. Good advice for all of us from a Mother who loves us. Do whatever Jesus tells you to do.

What follows in the drama is simply astounding. Jesus tells the servants to fill to the brim six stone water jars, each holding about 100 litres. They do so and then Jesus tells them, ‘now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward‘. The chief steward tastes the water now turned into wine. The steward did not know where the wine came from. But he recognizes at once that they have saved the best wine until last. Think about it for a moment. Jesus has just made 600 litres of really good wine. When Jesus shows up, what a party it is.

Here’s what I think is going on. Jesus is the Bridegroom, the invited guests are the Bride, the Church. The abundant wine is a sign of the wedding feast of the Reign of God.‘ My cup is running over.‘. Until Jesus shows up we will always be only drinking inferior wine‘. The new wine that Jesus provides is always the best of wines. ‘You have kept the good wine until now‘.

There are Eucharistic overtones to this story. Jesus wants to transform the water of our lives into the messianic wine of the kingdom of God. The water in the stone jars also represents the waters of Baptism. It is precisely the waters of baptism which will transform our lives into the wine of Jesus’ self emptying love.

It is also significant that it is only ‘the servants who know’ where the new wine comes from. We are all of us called to be people of the towel and water. Servants willing to follow the advice of the Mother of Jesus, ‘do whatever he tells you‘. Only then will we bring about the Reign of God. ‘Your kingdom come, your will be done‘.

The first and second readings both complement the story of the wedding feast at Cana. We are all of us invited to the wedding feast, we are all of us Bride of Christ. Our first reading tells us, ‘you shall be called my delight is in her, and your land married; for the Lord delights in you‘. Isn’t this what we all long for most in life. That someone would love us enough that they would simply delight in our presence. I know that when I pick up my twin granddaughters from daycare, that nobody else is that glad to see me. It is easy to mutually delight in the presence of a child. Our second reading reminds us that all of our gifts, including the gift of knowing that God delights in us, and our own capacity to delight in the gift of the other, exist for the ‘common good’. God wants everyone to share in this mutual delight.