

SUNDAY

by SUNDAY

by Joan Mitchell, CSJ

Place an empty wineglass and a bottle of wine or grape juice at the center of your group. Use it to pledge a commitment on page 4.

LEADER: To one the Spirit gives wisdom in discourse, to another the power to express knowledge.

All: There are different gifts but the same Spirit.

LEADER: One receives the gift of faith, another the gift of healing, a third the gift of prophecy,

All: There are different ministries but the same Spirit.

LEADER: Each receives the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

All: There are different works but the same Spirit.

LEADER: Spirit of God, help us discern what the gospel asks of us today.

All: May we use your gifts in us for the common good. Amen.

Jesus works his first sign in John's gospel at a wedding. Weddings celebrate the most basic of human unions—the love of a man and woman for each other. Weddings are when the married couples in the congregation reach for each other's hands and perhaps tear up as bride and groom come together to join their lives.

A wedding gathers extended family and friends not only to share the joy of the new couple but to welcome them into the larger community in which they will live, raise a family, make a home, and establish a place in

the warp and woof of church and society.

The wedding setting in the gospel hints at a marriage other than the one the guests are celebrating. His mother and new disciples accompany Jesus to the wedding. Turning six 20-gallon jars of water into choice wine provides 120 gallons for a wedding feast that must be nearly over if the guests have drunk up the available wine. Jesus provides wine enough for celebrating the messiah's relationship with his new community—the feast that continues in every Eucharist.

In the flow of the Church

year the Cana story follows Epiphany, a feast that points to Jesus as the savior of all peoples. Jesus is the end of the magi's journey and the choice wine in whom a new community rejoices.

● **What do you love about weddings? What weddings hold special meaning for you?**



GOSPEL

Jesus transforms water into wine.

NARRATOR: On the third day there was a wedding in the town of Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. While they were there, Jesus' mother noticed that the wine had run out.

MARY: Jesus, they have no wine.

JESUS: Mother, what is this to you and me? My hour has not yet come.

MARY: (to the servants) Do whatever he tells you.

NARRATOR: Nearby stood six large stone water jars, holding water for the washings prescribed by Jewish law. Jars held 20 to 30 gallons each.

JESUS: Fill the jars with water.

NARRATOR: The servants filled them to the brim.



JESUS: Now draw from the jars, and take it to the steward in charge of the feast.

NARRATOR: The servants did what Jesus asked. The chief steward tasted the water which had become wine without knowing where it had come from. Only the servants knew, because they had drawn the water. The steward called the bridegroom.

STEWARD: People usually serve their choice wine first, and then when guests have been drinking for a while, a lesser vintage. But you have kept the choice wine until now.

NARRATOR: Jesus performed this first of his signs at Cana in Galilee. He revealed his glory and his disciples began to believe in him.

John 2.1-11

Jesus is the choice wine.

John's gospel sees Jesus' miracles, such as his transforming action at the Cana wedding, as signs. These signs point to more than literally or physically happens in the action. The signs Jesus works in John are words and deeds that show God's Spirit poured out for the life of the world, that show forth God's glory.

The gospel writer deliberately places the wedding at Cana

immediately after Jesus begins calling disciples. In John's gospel, chapter one, Jesus gathers disciples, inviting them to come and see who he is. "Come and see where I live, stay with me," Jesus says to Andrew and another disciple (1.39). "Follow me," Jesus says to Philip (1.43). "Believe, and you will see greater things still," he says to Nathaniel (1.50).

John's gospel invites readers to come and see with Jesus' first disciples the signs that show who Jesus is and to reflect on Jesus' presence in the Spirit with us. John is not a historian trying to describe historical events in Jesus' life as they happened, but an evangelist proclaiming Jesus' words and deeds in such a way that his community will continue to find life in them. To the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus brings the nucleus of a new community.

The marriage feast that most concerns John is not the one in the story but the lasting and intimate relationship of faith between the risen Jesus and his disciples, including his mother. The abundant wine Jesus provides is not just for the wedding guests but for the community that continues to gather in his name.

- How do you respond to John's vision of the Christian community as a wedding party supplied abundantly with the wine of Jesus' Spirit?
- What choice wine flows to you through the sacraments?

The gathering of Jesus' new community at the Cana wedding takes place in John's gospel immediately before the account of Jesus cleansing the temple. The gospel writer deliberately puts the wedding and the cleansing back to back. For the Christians for whom John writes at the end of the first century, the ancient sources of belief and unity centered in

the temple have run dry like the wine at the wedding.

The actual temple lies in ruins after A.D. 70. No longer do festivals such as Passover or Pentecost bring Jews from many regions to Jerusalem. John's gospel sees the Christian community as the new temple, the new dwelling of the Spirit.

The new community Jesus gathers in John's gospel is diverse.

- It includes Jesus' mother.
- It includes followers of John the Baptist, such as Andrew (John 1.39-42).
- It includes Samaritans who come to believe on the word of the woman who meets Jesus at Jacob's well (John 4).
- Lastly, the new community includes Jewish Christians like the man born blind who experiences conflict with fellow Jews who follow teachers other than Jesus (John 9).

For John, water that becomes wine tells of the transformation of believers in baptism and eucharist. In the water bath and the cup, Christians come to share in the Spirit of Jesus being poured out for the life of the world. These diverse believers are Jesus' body, the new temple being raised up in Spirit and truth.

In our time many Catholics have experienced their parishes closing. Like the earliest Christians, they have lost their places of worship. For many the experience reveals the bonds that have formed in celebrating births and baptisms, confirmations and marriages, tragic deaths and the full faithful lives of elders. Bonds have formed at fall festivals, justice committees, religious education programs.

Eucharist works. Sharing the body of Christ nourishes holy communion among us and commitment to love one another. These very real bonds of belonging make changing parish communities painful but make us aware we have experienced the Spirit of Jesus sustaining us and knitting us together.

- **What in your experience survives in Christian communities that cluster or merge?**
- **When have you experienced the Spirit poured out in yourself or your Christian community?**



Jesus refuses to act at first when his mother notices the wedding guests have no wine. "My hour has not yet come," he says. In John's gospel Jesus refers to his passion and death as his hour. The water Jesus turns into wine at the wedding anticipates his lifeblood poured out in his passion. In his death Jesus gives over his spirit and gives birth to the community that gathers in his name.

The passionate self-giving of Jesus becomes the way of life for Christians, the way by which they, in and with Jesus, become the choice wine kept for the now of every age. In such self-giving, Christians become those who embody the words of the mother of Jesus, "Do whatever he tells you." By doing what Jesus tells us we become those who put abundant wine on the table of Jesus today and in the fullness of the wedding feast to come.

- **How and where do I see Jesus' disciples today pouring out their lifeblood?**
- **How do you live the words of Jesus' mother, "Do what he tells you?" How does your community of faith live these words?**

DO SOMETHING



- One in seven families experiences food insecurity as people experience the effects of the recession and drought. Visit your local food pantry to find ways to help.

God will delight in the people of Israel.

In the first reading Isaiah insists he will not be silent; his hour to speak has come. This reading comes from near the end of the book of Isaiah, a part added after the Babylonian captivity when people returning from exile to rebuild their community face a land empty of life and promise. Other nations call Israel "Forsaken" and "Desolate."

Isaiah compares Israel's true relationship with God to a marriage, in which God calls the people "My Delight" and the land "Espoused." The God who brings them home from Babylon will delight in Israel. God will espouse and enrich the land and the poor who believe and remain in faithful relationship.

You shall be called "My Delight."

For Zion's sake I will not be silent; for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet until her vindication shines forth like the dawn and her victory

like a burning torch. Nations will see your vindication; all kings your glory.

You shall be called a new name, pronounced by the mouth of God; You shall be a glorious crown in the hand of God, a royal diadem held by your God.

No more will people call you "Forsaken" or your land "Desolate."

You shall be called "My Delight," for God delights in you and takes your land as a spouse. As a young man marries a virgin, your builder will marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so shall your God rejoice in you.

Isaiah 62.1-5

- In what ways have our lands gone to waste and call for vision and rebuilding?
- Who among us in our society and Church stand forsaken, desolate, and in need of friendship with God and with us? What one practical thing could you or your group do to gather them into the community?
- If you are male, how do you relate to being asked to identify with the bride in the poetry?

PRAY

Share the cup of wine or grape juice as a pledge to one action you will do this week toward building up your faith community and the lives of desolate people. Pray:

LEADER: O God, you leave no one desolate; you never forsake us. You name us your "Delight," our earth, your "Spouse."

ALL: We have a new name.

LEADER: Like the water jars at the wedding your word fills us to the brim and transforms us.

ALL: Whatever you say we will do.

LEADER: We are the choice wine you save until now.

ALL: Now is our hour. We will not be silent.

LEADER: For the sake of our land, our Church, our family, our parish, our family of nations.

ALL: We will not be quiet. Whatever you say we will do.

LEADER: Happy are we whom you call to wait on your table and gather all nations to your feast.

ALL: We drink of your Spirit.



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