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**Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel, NYC**  
**January 20, 2019    2nd Sunday of Year C    John 2:1-11**

If ever it could be said, "When you've seen one, you've seen them all," certainly is true of wedding receptions. Wedding receptions seem to follow a script, a ritual, more frozen and precise than even a Papal Mass of the main altar of St. Peter's Basilica. Nothing ever seems to vary from the prescribed format: from the introduction of the wedding party; to the music that "the lovely bride and groom have chosen for their first dance together as husband and wife;" to the best man's embarrassed toast; to the cutting of the wedding cake; all performed right to the direction of some hammy M.C., punctuated by the periodic tinkling of champagne glasses, and always, always, always, the music is too loud.

In the time of Jesus, they must have had their own way of doing things, a pattern probably just as precise, just as frozen, as our own. But if we think of this wedding feast at Cana as like any other, then we miss the meaning and the message of today's Gospel. We miss the point if we consider Mary to be like some nice "Jewish mother," attentive to all the details, making sure everyone is comfortable, when suddenly she cries, "Oye! They have no wine!" If we see Mary as that nice "Jewish mother," who could call on her son, the "miracle worker," to bail out a possibly embarrassed couple, then we only catch the surface of what is being spoken of here. Then, it's only a miracle—a lot of razzmatazz—a magic trick, perhaps. But, St. John is careful to call it, not a miracle, but a "sign," a sign that reveals not so much Jesus' power, as His identity, an indication of who Jesus really is, or as John says, "His glory,"

A sign is like an arrow pointing. It's a glimpse of something much more full of wonder than people standing around, scratching their heads and saying, "Gee, how did he pull that off?" A sign invites exploration towards where it points, an exploration of who this Jesus is at what He is all about. Throughout this passage of St. John's Gospel, there are words that hint at something much more taking place than a flashy miracle. For instance, why is it wine that has run out? Why not loaves of bread and fish as on another occasion? And why does Jesus provide so much wine, and of such excellent vintage? For St. John the vast amount of choice wine reveals who is present at that wedding reception. Over and over again the prophets of the Old Testament spoke of the time when the Messiah would appear as "running over with wine." They meant it would be a time when people would be drunk with the joy of God's presence. The prophets are almost psychedelic in describing the scene. They say, "the earth will yield a harvest 10,000 fold; each vine will have 1,000 branches; each branch a thousand clusters of grapes; each grape will yield 120 gallons. That's a lot of Manischewitz to

pack away. Interestingly, the water that is to be transformed is the water kept in the purification jars, representing the whole set of rituals the Jews observed to demonstrate they were "right" with God. The transformation of water into wine shows Jesus replacing these empty rituals with a life lived in the joy of the Holy Spirit. St. John will say that this is the "first of many signs" that Jesus will unveil in His ministry, an indication that something dramatically new is beginning.

And, Jesus, when asked by Mary's to intervene and save the day, says, "My hour has not yet come." This mention of an appointed "our" that lies in the future, a destiny that awaits, runs throughout John's Gospel. This "hour" refers to Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection. This is the "hour" when the love that is the center of all reality, the love is God, becomes vulnerable to man's attempts to banish and extinguish that love in the person of Jesus. On the cross Jesus dies alone, afraid, powerless, with no miracle to save Him. Yet this is the "hour" when what appears as defeat becomes victory. Jesus dies not into the void, but into God, and dying into God He rises above all attempts at loveless power and cruel manipulation.

Today's Gospel gives us the chance to reflect on where we stand in your journey of faith; what is it that we want Jesus to provide for us. Do we seek miracles, or are we content with signs? Do we seek security by aligning ourselves with "Almighty God," or are we willing to learn to love, to give of ourselves in a way that opens us up to the path of vulnerability, a willingness to be broken in the fray of life rather than immunized from all the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune?" St. John invites us to see Jesus as more than the One whom we can call upon to come to our rescue, whether for something trifling or in time of tragedy. St. John invites us to see in the story of Cana more than a miracle, but a "sign" that shows where love leads.

Jesus does not promise us a life free from care and worry. He does not offer an exemption from the human condition. He promises only that we could become like him, to have what he had, viz., the capacity to love, to live with trust and faith, in the face of all the negativity that threatens to undo us. Jesus gives us not a magic carpet ride over the vicissitudes of life, but the strength to straddle the polarities of life, to deal with the frustrations, the absurdities, the injustices of this world in a redemptive and realistic way. Like the old song says, Jesus didn't promise us a "rose garden, but the ability to walk through even the Garden of Gethsemane, as did He. This is the "glory" that was glimpsed at Cana, revealed on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. This is the "glory" that can be ours, if we are willing to follow to where the "sign" points.