

Second SUN – Ordinary Time – C

Deacon Ron Tocci – Jan 14, 2007

Whenever I read John's Gospel I recall the words of my Scripture professor who said that reading John's Gospel was like peeling an onion. You peel 1 layer off and there's another layer to deal with and each layer is stronger and more pungent than the 1 before... Today's passage is like that: many layers. ...many theological messages... But, above all, it's a story – a great story – about the 1st of Jesus' miracles, the 1st real sign to His disciples of who He was... It's a story that also gives us a glimpse into the relationship between Jesus and His mother... Now in American popular culture – especially in the Jewish community itself - the relationship between a Jewish mother and her son is often portrayed as one in which the mother spends her time sighing, pleading and suffering because her son – regardless of how successful he is - rarely meets her expectations of what a good son should be... If Christopher Columbus had a Jewish Mother, she'd have told him, "I don't care what you discovered, you still could've found time to write."... If Thomas Edison had a Jewish Mother, she'd have said, "Of course, I'm proud you invented the light bulb. Now turn it off and go to sleep."... Albert Einstein did have a Jewish Mother who may have told him, "So –big deal - you got your picture on the cover of Life magazine, but couldn't you have done something with that hair?"

Of course, this is a caricature of Jewish mothers, and I sincerely doubt Mary was anything like that with Jesus, although the Gospel story does show that she clearly had some influence on her Son... When Mary said to Jesus at the wedding, "They have no more wine," it wasn't that she needed a drink.... She was genuinely concerned for the bride and groom, because in that culture, running out of wine at a wedding was a major breach of hospitality; the wedding would be ruined, the couple would be disgraced and talked about for the rest of their married life... So what Mary was saying to Jesus was, "This is serious; these poor kids are in trouble... I know you haven't started your ministry yet < Jesus... But can't you do something?"... And Jesus responded, in effect, saying, "How is this my problem? I can't do anything about it... It's not time yet for me to reveal myself.... It's not the plan."... Mary pretty much ignores that and assumes that Jesus is going to be a good Jewish son and *listen to his mother*. So she says to the servants: "Do whatever He tells you."

And Jesus, knowing that the situation was very serious, at least to the people who were there, decides to change His timetable... He hadn't planned on making Himself known yet, hadn't planned on doing His 1st miracle yet, but there was a real and important human need... He responds to that need and performs what John calls the "beginning of His signs" that point to who He is... He changes the water into wine, the wedding is saved, and the bride and groom are spared extreme shame and embarrassment.... Now what's important here is not just that this miracle was the beginning of Jesus revealing His identity as the Son of God, but also that it showed how He was going to live His life... for the sake of others... Who He was and the power He had been given by the Father were not for Him, not for His needs... It was always and only for others,... from the very beginning.

Let's turn for a minute to the 2nd reading and what Paul says to the Corinthians... There was some peculiar and troubling stuff going on in the church in Corinth in the 1st century... They were having a bunch of different spiritual experiences and encounters with God -which was fine- but they were getting possessive and competitive about all of it.... They were saying things like, "this gift is mine, ...this way of doing things is mine,... this spirituality is mine,... this special something is mine." ...What Paul says to them is what Jesus discovered when the wine ran out.... Paul tells them, "What you have is not for you.... What you have is for others."... Whatever gift, whatever ability, whatever power you have comes from God who gave it to you to be used for the good of others.... My friends, this is a fundamental religious truth about the nature and

purpose of God then and now: What you have is not for you...What you have been given is not for you.....It was true about Jesus...It was true about the folks in Corinth...It is true about us...

We will never get our religion right, indeed get our lives right, until we realize that all we have, ...our talents, our abilities, our material resources, our spiritual resources,.. all that we have is gift....GIFT...given to us so that we might be givers, so that we might build up, so that we might help, so that we might heal,...so that we might be a part of something greater, so that we might serve our neighbors and build up God's Kingdom here on earth. In one way or another, that is the purpose of our lives, and everything in them.

At that wedding in Cana, it wasn't just **more** wine that Jesus made...It wasn't just **better** wine that Jesus made...It was a superb **new** wine He created...It was the **1st** sign that He had the power to make all things **new**, that He was sent to initiate a **new** creation – a New Heaven and New Earth - by creating new attitudes, new ways of seeing the world, new hearts, in all people who believe. ...Now, that **new creation** won't be finished until Jesus comes back, until He returns to re-create the entire universe and purge it of all pain and suffering, all evil, and all darkness...But until the day of His return,...Jesus will keep doing the work of re-creation...and He does it through us, through our lives,...we who believe in Him...You and I are channels of His transforming, saving, life-giving power for each other. ..and for those outside this building...We each possess God-given talents, abilities and resources. ...and G. presents us with opportunities to use them to serve Him as we serve our neighbor...

You participate in His work of re-creation: Each time you volunteer at a soup kitchen;...Each time you give up an afternoon to help out in an inner-city after-school program...Each time you get up early on a damp, cold Saturday morning to go picket outside an abortion clinic... You participate in His work of re-creation: Each time you swing a hammer for Habitat for Humanity;... Each time you challenge a public policy that treats people unjustly;...Each time you spend an hour with a lonely person;... You participate in His work of re-creation: Each time you provide shelter and hospitality to those who have nowhere else to go;...Each time you dig deep into your pockets to help someone in need ;...Each time you take a moment to comfort and pray with someone who is hurting;...Each time you give from what has been given to you.

You know, right now I almost feel like I'm preaching to the choir...because you people of Assumption are a giving and compassionate people...I know that from your generous response to our many appeals to help your neighbors in need within both the local community and world-wide community...You guys are great...Yet, I recall the words of our dear Fr. Charles Adams who often reminded us that we can never outdo God in our generosity...We can never begin to give to others in the same measure God has given to us...We must never get to the point where we think we are doing enough....Jesus told His disciples: "To whomever much is given, from him much will be required." (*Lk 12:48*) ...He wasn't talking about material possessions; He was talking about anything and everything that we have that can be used to lift up another, to bring new life to another...

Even those of us who already give, can do better...So I'm challenging all of us here to be like those servants at the wedding...Hear the words of Mary: "Do whatever He tells you."... Whatever He says, do... Wherever He sends, go... Don't question, don't debate, don't argue, do whatever He tells you...Right now He's telling you – through me – to listen, REALLY listen to the representative from our Social Justice/Outreach Committee who will speak briefly after communion, and will describe the kinds of things we do at Assumption to help Jesus in His work of re-creation. ...And, also, please take a minute after Mass to visit the committee's information table in the foyer to find out even more about the many opportunities to help in this work...My friends, when we live outside ourselves, for others and for the greater whole,... wonderful things can happen...Miracles can happen...Let's make it happen! AMEN.