

**Second Sunday of Ordinary Time
January 20, 2018**

John's account of the wedding at Cana is fairly short – just 208 words – but there is an *awful lot* going on in those 208 words. In my preparation I was faced with two options: cover everything in one *very* long homily, or cover just a few things now and save the rest for later. You'll be happy to know I chose the second option. So today I'll primarily look at the interactions between Jesus and Mary, *her* intercession, *his* response, and what all that means to *us*.

One thing that might jump out at you in today's Gospel is when Jesus seems to refer to Mary disrespectfully, impersonally referring to her as "woman." To our 21st century ears it might sound like he was being condescending or sexist, but the *opposite* is true. Jesus called Mary "woman" because, as Eve was the first woman of the *Old Covenant*, Mary is the new Eve – the first woman of the *New Covenant*. Eve's disobedience led to *separation* in man's relationship with God, but Mary's obedience led to *reparation* through her son, Jesus Christ. In calling Mary "woman," Jesus is acknowledging her as the new Eve - *the* woman among women. He is *elevating* her, not putting her down. So we shouldn't let his use of the word "woman" bug us.

I have to admit there is a part of the Gospel that *does* bug me though; it's not something it *says*, but something it *doesn't say*. Mary tells Jesus, "they have no wine." Jesus responds in a way that seems to say, "so what?" But the next thing you know, he's turning water into wine. Something must have happened between his seemingly dismissive statement, and Mary confidently telling the servants "do whatever her tells you," but the Gospel doesn't tell us what. I have a theory. I call it "the look." Every mom I know has a "look"; a certain facial expression that can convey *exactly* what she's thinking without a word being said. I bet Mary had a "look" too. I picture Jesus saying, "what does your concern have to do with me?" and Mary giving him one of those eyebrows-raised "excuse me?" sort of looks. The next thing you know, Jesus is turning water into wine. It's *completely* unscriptural, but it kind of *works*, doesn't it? I'm sure I'm wrong, and when I get to heaven, God willing, Jesus or Mary can set me straight, but for now that's the way I like

to picture it. It takes care of the part that bugs me, and it adds a little more personal nature to Jesus and Mary's relationship. Anyway, take that for what it's worth.

So, back to the actual Gospel, the wedding at Cana also shows us Mary's role as *intercessor*. We don't know if she knew exactly what Jesus was going to do, but, having been made aware of the wine shortage, she presented it to her divine Son. She does exactly the same thing for us today – she presents our needs and concerns to Jesus. Saint John Paul II said this: "In John's text...the description of the Cana event outlines...a new kind of motherhood according to the *spirit* and not just according to the *flesh*; that is to say Mary's solicitude for human beings, her coming to them in the wide variety of their wants and needs. At Cana in Galilee there is shown only one...aspect of human need, apparently a small one of little importance ("They have no wine"). But...this coming to the aid of human needs means...bringing those needs within the radius of Christ. Mary places herself between her Son and mankind in the reality of their wants, needs and sufferings. She puts herself in the middle...in her position as mother."

Mary is the mother of Jesus, but she is also our mother – our *spiritual* mother. We can and should share our problems, wants, and needs with her, knowing that as our spiritual mother, she will present them to Jesus on our behalf. Some people have a *problem* with Mary's role as intercessor. St. Paul's first letter to Timothy says that there is only "one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus." That sure *sounds* like we should skip Mary and go directly to Jesus, doesn't it? But Mary's intercession as our spiritual mother doesn't *replace* the mediation of Jesus; it actually acknowledges Jesus' primacy as the mediator between God and man. At the wedding at Cana, she doesn't try to solve the problem *herself*, but presents the host's needs to her Son. She doesn't tell the servants what to do, but tells them to do whatever *Jesus* tells them to do. Her *entire focus* is on her *Son*, not on *herself*. She isn't acting as the mediator between God and man, but merely presenting the problem to her Son, who is the mediator.

Finally, take note of what Jesus did after Mary told him about the wine shortage. I doubt they really needed 120 to 180 more gallons of wine, but Jesus responded to Mary's intercession with

abundance. When she intercedes for us, he responds in the same way; with abundant gifts, abundant grace, abundant mercy, abundant love. Now, that doesn't mean we're going to get everything we ask for just because we go through Mary, and it doesn't mean that if we tell Mary we need a million dollars, Jesus will give us two. Sometimes, we need to be told "no." But even a "no" from Jesus is given out of abundant love, because he knows more than we do what's best for us.

Mary's role as intercessor and the abundant way Jesus responds should bring us *joy* and *hope*; not just for our life on earth, but for our *eternal* life. Mary's desire is for us to join her Son in heaven, where there will be no wants, needs, or sufferings, but only abundant love and joy in his presence. We should not be shy about asking for her intercession; Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners *now* and at the hour of our *death*. Amen.