

Commentary on Sunday Scripture – Year C

2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

First reading:

(Isaiah 62.1-5)

The Wedding Feast of the Lord

The marriage relationship is perhaps the most intimate of the personal relationships we know, designed to become ever deeper and more absorbing. Even the relationship of mother to child cannot equal it. So, in the Bible, the relationship of the Lord to his people is described in this way.

But, like many human marriage relationships, it went through bad patches. Israel was so determinedly unfaithful to the Lord that eventually he was compelled to bite the bullet and forsake her to those with whom she had prostituted herself. This could not be permanent: Israel could not go on being called 'Abandoned' and 'Forsaken'. The past would be forgotten. After the return of Israel from exile in Babylon, Isaiah prophesies the final wedding in terms of the unalloyed joy of a fresh wedded couple.

So in the gospels Jesus uses the figure of the final wedding feast, and the image of himself as the bridegroom in the joy of the festival. He always gives us another chance, an unalloyed welcome.

Question:

How many sayings and parables of Jesus can you remember which use this image?

Second reading:

(1 Corinthians 12.4-11)

Gifts of the Spirit

At the beginning of each year the Church gives us some six Sundays of readings from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, that troubled community. Corinth was a thriving port town of southern Greece, with a very heterogeneous community, rich and poor, academics and dockers. There were no leaders in the community, and reliance on the Spirit for guidance in the problems of living as Christians did not always provide a solution. These three Sundays show Paul trying to help.

Yes, the Spirit is at work in them in many different ways. There are many different gifts, all necessary for this varied community. The trouble seems to have been that each person valued their own contribution so much that the gifts of others seemed insignificant. Paul's stress on the variety of ways in which the Spirit works to build up a community gives us the occasion to reflect on the variety of gifts which the Spirit has poured out on our own Christian community, and on every individual member of it. I can rejoice in gifts that God has given to me, but only if simultaneously I think of all the gifts which others have and I lack.

Question:

Apart from love, would you say that any gift is more important to the community than any other?

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Gospel:

(John 2.1-12)

The Wedding Feast at Cana

Year C is the year of Luke's gospel, but we start with this reading from John, the symbolic beginning of Jesus' ministry. It is full of riches. After the first reading from Isaiah, it is impossible not to see this 'sign' (as John calls it) as a sign of that final wedding feast of God and his people.

Furthermore, in Jewish thought water represents the law: in an arid land water is the sign of life and is precious - just so the Law of God is precious and gives life. Jesus transforms this water of the Law into the wine of the New Covenant - and in such generous quantities, over 100 gallons of wine!

Then there is Mary's part: Jesus says his hour has not yet come (and the reader knows that the Hour of Jesus will be the moment of his exaltation at the Cross and Resurrection), but Mary's confident plea is a reminder to us of the power of her intercession. She will be mentioned no more in this gospel until she is present at the Cross, sharing the Passion of her Son and joined to the Beloved Disciple to form the first Christian community.

Question:

What was Mary thinking while she waited for something to happen?
