

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

For a few days last week, I gathered in Melbourne with three of my sisters. We took the opportunity to celebrate my sister Jean's 80th. birthday which comes up in a few days' time. For the special meal we had for her my brother in law went to his wine collection and brought out some of his best wine. But it wasn't a matter of bringing out the best wine last. We started with that.

In our Gospel today, the best wine is not brought out until all the other wine had been consumed. We probably remember this part of the gospel best but there is so much in this gospel passage that we could ponder upon. Because we are reading John's gospel, we can expect that he has carefully crafted his story and that he will be inviting us to look beneath the words that he is using. We might notice first the order in which people are mentioned at the beginning of the passage. That the mother of Jesus is named before her son, alerts us to the possibility that she is to have a big part in this story. She is never called by name.

Mary is the one who notices that they had run out of wine and she alerts Jesus to that fact. The response of Jesus can only be seen as a rebuke to his mother. "Woman, why turn to me? My hour has not yet come." How do we interpret that? It seems that Jesus doesn't care that they have run out of wine. But there is

something deeper here. Jesus is saying to his mother that there is a bigger picture here that she is no longer part of. Jesus can no longer be directed by his mother on earth, but by his Father in heaven. Jesus begins to talk about his hour, a theme that is very strong in John's gospel. His hour had not yet come to reveal his glory as God. Jesus would only be able to say that his hour had come when he was about to face his passion and death. It is then that Mary is again called "woman" by Jesus as she stands with him at the foot of his cross. We do not hear of Mary again in John's gospel until then.

What is crucial in today's gospel is what Mary does next. Despite the rebuke that she has received from her son she simply says to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you." Everything else that happens in the gospel follows from that. Jesus tells the servants to fill the jars with water. They do exactly what he tells them. He then tells them to draw some of that water and take it to the steward. They obey his word without question. When the steward tasted what they had brought to him, he discovered that the water had been turned into the best wine that he had tasted.

From outside of that intimate union that Jesus now shares with his Father Mary acts as someone who trusts completely in whatever the word of Jesus might bring. From outside of that bigger picture that will determine

the hour of Jesus, Mary trusts in the word that Jesus will speak, not knowing what that word might be. Mary is the perfect example of a disciple of Jesus. She shows us how to trust in him. She directs us to respond to his word by doing whatever he tells us. If we take anything from today's gospel this is what we should hold on to. So often we are called to trust in Jesus love for us when we do not know the bigger picture that moves him to act on our behalf. So often we are called to do what he tells us to do before we can understand why.

There are other things that we can draw from today's gospel. Jesus turned a lot of water into wine, much more than was needed. It is an expression of the super abundance of his care for us, his prodigal, wasteful love for us. That there were six stone water jars there, one less than the perfect number, might suggest to us that Jesus was replacing something that was good by something that was perfect. Those jars held the water used for the purification rites of the old law. He was ushering in the new law of love that would be sealed with his blood. The bridegroom in this story doesn't do anything. But in the eyes of the steward he is the one who is responsible for keeping the best wine till last. The next time we will hear of a bridegroom in John's gospel it will be on the lips of John the Baptist who calls himself the friend of the bridegroom. Even in today's gospel we understand that Jesus is the bridegroom who

is responsible for the new wine. We the Church are the bride that he loves.

If we have learnt from today's gospel that trust and obedience are at the heart of being a disciple of Jesus, then we can look to St Paul to see how we might exercise our discipleship. Paul tells us that there are a whole variety of gifts that God gives to us. These gifts of God's Spirit are given to us to be used in the service of others. He wants us to understand that we are meant to work together as God's family, supporting each other and complementing each other as we use these gifts. "All these are works of the one and the same Spirit who distributes different gifts to different people just as he chooses."

One of the challenges that we have is to recognise the gifts that God has given to us and when we have recognised those gifts to have the generosity to use those gifts for others. A further challenge that faces those of us who have been here for a while is to keep reaching out to newer members of our community and learning who they are and what their gifts may be. Then we can invite them to use their gifts in whatever way the Lord may wish them to do that. Inviting others to serve us demands that we trust them and trust the Lord who will be working in and through them. It is the kind of trust that Mary can teach us much about.