

JAN. 17: O. T. II: ISAIAH 62: 1-5; I COR 12: 4-11, JOHN 2: 1-11

Johnny Carson (who hosted the *Tonight Show* for 30 years) was interviewing an eight-year-old boy one night. The young man was asked to appear on the Late Show because he had rescued two friends from a coal mine outside his hometown in West Virginia. As Johnny questioned him, it became apparent that the boy was a Christian. Johnny asked him if he attended Sunday school. When the boy said he did, Johnny inquired, "What are you learning in Sunday school?" "Last week," the boy replied, "our lesson was about how Jesus went to a wedding and turned water into wine." The audience burst into laughter and applause. Keeping a straight face, Johnny asked, "And what did you learn from that story?" The boy squirmed in his chair. It was apparent he hadn't thought about this. But then he lifted up his face and said, "If you're going to have a wedding, make sure you invite Jesus and Mary!" And that is precisely the message of today's gospel: make sure you invite Jesus and Mary wherever you live and wherever you go - they are the only ones you'll ever need. In other words, today's gospel lesson is about the sufficiency of Christ in our lives and the power of His mother's intercession.

The miracle at Cana is the first of seven "signs" in John's gospel - miraculous events by which Jesus showed forth his divinity. Let us get into the scene. When Mary pointed out the problem to Jesus, his reply seems, on the surface, to be a bit sharp. This, however, is to misunderstand the passage. Although Jesus addressed his mother as "Woman" or "Dear Woman," the term was roughly equivalent to our word "lady" or "madam", and was not, in itself, unnecessarily harsh. It was, in fact, a term of respect and is the same word Jesus used when he addressed his mother from the cross, saying of John, "Woman, behold your Son." Jesus' next words are also easily misunderstood. He asked Mary, "*What is it to me and to you?*" This implies no rudeness on Jesus' part. Probably, it means, "We are *guests*, and guests are not expected to supply the things needed at a feast." Jesus further protested that his "*hour has not yet come,*" The "hour" of Jesus includes his passion, death, resurrection and exaltation taken as one great event. In spite of Jesus' detachment from the problem, Mary instructed the waiters, "*Do whatever He tells you,*" showing faith that her son would do what was needed to save the honor of the newlyweds and their families. The Church uses the account of this miracle to remind us that, by virtue of her position as the Mother of God and our heavenly mother, Mary's intercession for us with God has great power.

The same Jesus, who transformed water into wine at Cana, transforms our gifts of bread and wine into his own Body and Blood in order to give us spiritual nourishment that we may fill the empty hearts around us with love.

Exegesis: Christ's first miracle, which John refers to as a "sign," takes place in the village of Cana in Galilee. The hometown of the disciple Nathaniel but an otherwise insignificant town, Cana was located some eight miles northeast of Nazareth. This miracle is the first in John's series of seven signs by which Jesus manifested his power and glory during his public ministry. Presumably, the "disciples" who accompanied Jesus were: Andrew, Simon Peter, Zebedee's sons James and John, Philip, and Nathaniel. Jesus' mother Mary was also present. Joseph is not mentioned in the story; he may well have died already. It is also possible that Mary was in some way related to the bride or groom and may have been serving as an assistant to the wedding director. According to a version recounted in the Coptic Gospels, the bridegroom was Simon of Cana, Jesus' disciple and the brother of Jacob and Judah. He was the son of Joseph's brother Cleophas (Helpai) and Mary's elder sister, and hence the nephew of both Mary and Joseph. Such weddings usually began on Wednesdays with the celebration lasting for seven days. During this period, guests arrived each day bringing gifts and participating in the joy of the occasion. In verse 3, we read that, in the course of the celebration, "the wine was gone." This was a difficult situation for the young couple, and may indicate that they came from poor families. Among the Jews of that time, wine was not only considered a staple food item, but was also frequently used in times of celebration. To run short of wine at a wedding feast was certainly a serious problem, particularly damaging to the reputation of the host and an ill omen for the newly-married couple.

JOKE OF THE WEEKEND: Two senior ladies met for the first time since graduating from high school. One asked the other, "You were always so organized in school, meticulously planning every detail. How did you plan your married life?" "Well," said her friend, "My first marriage was to a millionaire; my second marriage was to an actor; my third marriage was to a preacher; and now I'm married to an undertaker." Asked the friend, "What do those marriages have to do with a well planned life?" "The first marriage was for the money, the second for the show, the third to get ready and the fourth to go!"