

Take-Home 5. They Have No Wine

From the Beginning

What We Found

Running out of wine at a first century wedding was a serious public humiliation, not a minor inconvenience. The first sign is a rescue of somebody's dignity.

Mary does not ask for anything. She states the need, they have no wine, and leaves the response to her son.

Her last recorded words anywhere in Scripture are do whatever he tells you. She notices, she asks, she points away from herself, and then she goes quiet.

Six stone jars for purification, holding somewhere between a hundred and twenty and a hundred and eighty gallons. The prophets described the age to come as a feast of well aged wine, and the abundance strikingly evokes those images of messianic plenty.

In John, the hour points to his Passion and glorification, culminating in the cross. The first sign, worked at a wedding, is dated by reference to it, and when the hour comes the same woman is standing there and is addressed with the same word.

The steward says the good wine has been kept until now, which reverses how anyone would run a party. With God the best is later.

The Church sees in Cana the confirmation of the goodness of marriage and the announcement that marriage would become an efficacious sign of Christ's presence (CCC 1613). She does not claim the sacrament was instituted there by a formula.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. AUGUSTINE ON WHY CHRIST CAME TO A WEDDING

Preaching through John's Gospel, St. Augustine argued in substance that Christ went to the wedding to confirm that marriage is his own creation and not something merely tolerated, and that anyone who claims marriage is evil should notice where the Lord chose to work his first sign.

That argument had a live target in Augustine's day, when several movements taught that the body and marriage were beneath the truly spiritual. It has a live target now for the opposite reason: a culture that treats marriage as a lifestyle option rather than as something Christ deliberately entered.

Summary of his teaching in the Tractates on the Gospel of John.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN PAUL II ON THE MOTHER AT CANA

In his encyclical on the Blessed Virgin, St. John Paul II read the Cana scene as showing Mary's particular way of being present: she notices a human need, she places it before her son, and she then directs everyone else toward him rather than toward herself.

He also noted the link between the address at Cana and the address at the cross, and read the two scenes together as the frame of her role in the life of the Church.

Do whatever he tells you.

Summary of his teaching on the Cana scene in Redemptoris Mater.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. LOUIS DE MONTFORT ON GOING THROUGH THE MOTHER

St. Louis de Montfort taught, in substance, that everything Mary does terminates in Christ, and that devotion to her which does not end in him has misunderstood her entirely.

Test it against the text. At Cana she speaks twice: once to her son about a need, and once to the servants about obedience to him. Then she does not speak again in the scene.

Summary of his teaching in True Devotion to Mary.

Live It This Week

- **Name one thing you have run out of, out loud, in prayer, together.** Do not add instructions for God about how to fix it. Say the sentence and stop, the way Mary did.
- **Do whatever he tells you, once, specifically.** Choose one thing you already know Christ is asking of you and that you have been putting off, and do it this week. Tell your fiancé which one you chose.
- **Thank the person who notices.** Call or write the person in your life who sees what is missing before anyone else. Tell them you noticed them noticing.
- **Read Ephesians 5:21-33 before next session,** the whole passage, and read it twice. Next week is the pivot of this study.

BEFORE THE ALTAR

This week. Ask the parish what your wedding liturgy can actually include: whether it will be a Mass or a celebration outside Mass, who may read, what the music norms are, and when the choices are due. Then decide together what the celebration is for, and set a budget that will not put you in debt on day one.

Also. Say one thing you have run out of, out loud, in prayer, together, without adding instructions for God.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

His mother said to the servants, Do whatever he tells you.

John 2:5

Before next session: Read Ephesians 5:21-33 before Session 6. The whole passage, twice.

Catechism: CCC 726, 964, 1335, 1613, 2618.