

19 January 2025 -<sup>2nd</sup> Sunday 'C

[Is 62:1-5; 1 Cor 12:4-11; Jn 2:1-11](#)

### Homily

The Evangelist John is a mystic and a theologian. In the account we have just heard, we must not see the simple description of a sympathetic miracle, in which Jesus provides the guests with the wine they need to continue the feast, perhaps because his disciples have largely helped to deplete the reserves. The key to the story is found, as usual in John, at the end of the narrative: This, says John, was the first of the signs Jesus performed; and this sign gives us the key to interpreting the rest of the Gospel. It is indeed a 'sign', which is quite different from a 'miracle'.

The central element of the story is the six stone jars. These jars were used for ablutions by the Jews to purify themselves. It's a bit strange to find six of them - and large ones at that - in a private house where a wedding is being celebrated. These jars are made of stone, like the tablets on which the ancient Law was given to Moses. And the important thing is that they are empty. These empty jars represent the Old Covenant, when man lived in fear, obsessed by the tension between the pure and the impure, the permitted and the forbidden, and trying to free himself from his sense of impurity through ritual ablutions.

Jesus replaced this religion of the pure and the impure, of ablutions and sacrifices, with a religion of love and mercy symbolised by the new wine of the Spirit. Jesus would one day say that he had not come to abolish this ancient Law, but to fulfil it. The number of jars (there are six) signifies precisely the lack of completeness, because seven is the perfect number. Jesus came to fulfil the ancient economy by having these jars filled with water. They are not filled with wine, but with water. The water turns into wine not in the jars, but when it is served!

At the beginning of his Gospel, from the time of Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan, John carefully counts the days. This is the sixth day: the day that corresponds to the sixth day of Genesis, the day God created man. So Jesus comes to create a new humanity. Throughout his Gospel, John shows Jesus as the new Adam (Mary as the new Eve), and the Kingdom he has come to establish as a new creation.

Jesus and Mary are not at this wedding in the same capacity. John weighs his words carefully: 'There was a wedding in Cana. Jesus' mother was there. Jesus was also invited. Mary is there because she

still belongs to the Old Covenant. When she points out to Jesus, who is invited, the lack of wine, He points out that this wine, which has now run out, belongs to the past. *'What does it matter to you and me?'* However, the New Covenant, the new creation that He has come to bring, is present on this day only as a *sign*, because His hour (the hour of His Passion) has not yet come.

It is surprising that the Evangelist John, who is so close to Mary, does not mention her by name. He simply says that *'the Mother of Jesus was there'*. Jesus addresses her as *'woman'*, an expression that heralds the woman par excellence who will be the strong woman at the foot of the Cross, crowned with twelve stars at the end of the Apocalypse. Whereas Eve, the mother of the living, had offered the apple to the first Adam, Mary was content to point out to Jesus that the wine was missing, and Jesus, by inviting her to break with the past, made her the mother of the New Covenant, the mother of the Church; and she was already exercising this role by saying to the servants: *'Do whatever he tells you'*.

Jesus' hour has not yet come. Before that time comes, he will experience all the tensions created by those who cling to the Old Covenant, symbolised here by the master of the feast who calls out to the bridegroom and reproaches him for not having followed the usual rules and not having served the best wine first. The scribes and doctors of the ancient Law, who are ignorant of mercy, will constantly reproach Jesus for not following traditions and customs.

This Gospel invites us to allow ourselves to be instructed and formed by the signs worked by Jesus, and to draw our experience of God from the new wine of the Spirit rather than from a purity sought through observances and rites. We do not belong to the Old Covenant. We have nothing to do with the master of the wedding feast and his outdated customs. Let us listen instead to Mary who tells us: *'Do whatever he tells you'*. Then we will be the guests at the wedding feast of the Lamb that John will describe in his Apocalypse and that was already announced in the text from Isaiah that we had as our first reading: *'As the bride is the joy of her husband, so you will be the joy of your God'*.

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