

# THE PASSION AT CANA

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C

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*Isaiah 62:1-5*  
*Psalms 96:1-2, 2-3, 7-8, 9-10*

*1 Corinthians 12:4-11*  
*John 2:1-11*  
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Of the four Gospels, John has the most elevated, mystical presentation of the mystery of Jesus. As such, some have proposed a number of places where the gospel can in fact end, having presented the true efficacy of the life and death of Christ in symbolic or theological language or stories. As we have it in our Bible, the Gospel of John ends with the Risen Jesus' commission of Peter to "feed my sheep." However some notable experts (indeed many bibles – such as the New American Bible) head this portion of John (21:1-3) as the "Appendix" or "Epilogue," suggesting that John 20:31 originally ended the gospel with Jesus appearing to Thomas, addressing any lingering doubt in the Resurrection.

Many suggest that the beginning of John, called the "Prologue" (Jn 1:1-18) is a dense, concentrated summary of the Gospel that follows. Many remember this passage as the "Last Gospel" read at the conclusion of the pre-Vatican II liturgy. Currently, the Prologue is read as the Gospel reading of the Christmas Mass During the Day. If read on its own, the passage serves as a powerful theological summary of the

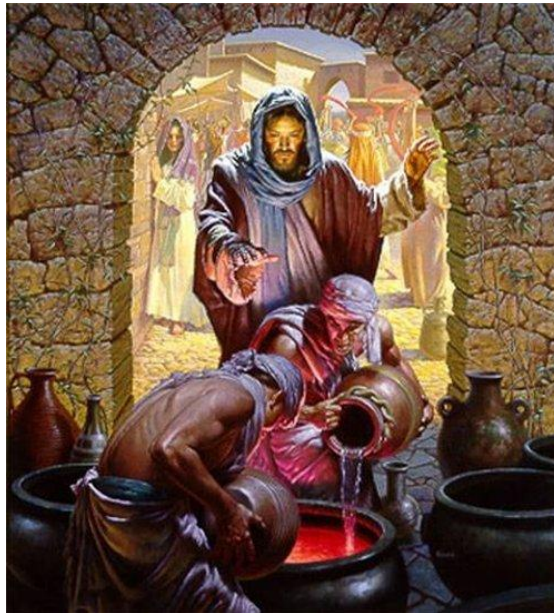
dynamic effect of Christ's life, ministry, death and resurrection. Another possible "conclusion" could be the story we have come to know simply as "The Wedding At Cana."

Many and varied interpretations of the Wedding at Cana have been put forth over the centuries. One states very simply: when water beheld its master, it blushed. Others see a simple (or simplistic) example in obeying one's mother. Others remember the kind of people Jesus had for disciples and wonder little as to why the wine ran out, and why Mary became so concerned about it. Others see it as a metaphor of sorts to the very Passion and Death of Christ.

The story, found only in John's Gospel, wraps up a seven-day period in which much happens to reflect the action of God's plan for salvation, culminating in the revelation of Christ's Glory. Specific events are described during the course of this period that some scholars refer to as a "symbolic week."

On the first day, John the Baptist gives his first testimony (Jn 1:19-28).

On the second day, John points Jesus out as the "Lamb of God..." (Jn 1:29-34).



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## The Wedding at Cana

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On the third day, John instructs Andrew to follow Jesus. Andrew later brings Peter (Jn 1:35-42).

On the fourth day, Jesus calls Philip, who brings Nathaniel (Jn 1:43-51).

Three days later, Jesus attends the Wedding at Cana and reveals his glory (Jn 2:1-11).

In John the Baptist we see the prophetic herald of the New Creation ushered in by Jesus. Jesus, as Savior is the author of the New Creation who gathers the nucleus of His church. At the Wedding at Cana, Jesus, and his disciples with “the mother of Jesus” (who his never named in John’s Gospel) participate in an event where Christ’s glory is revealed and the vivification of the Church is symbolized.

The characters and elements in the Gospel story are Jesus, His disciples, “the mother,” the water, the wine, and the context of a wedding. The presence of the disciples suggests the presence of the Church, the followers of Christ. The prayers of God’s holy people for salvation can be seen in the request of “the mother” (indeed Jesus’ “mother” is a symbol of the Church, and in John’s Gospel she is mentioned only in this story, and at the foot of the Cross). The new wine, better than the old, can represent the graces poured forth in Christ’s redemption, won through His Death on the Cross when blood and water flowed from his side. The mention of Christ’s “hour” indicates

the ultimate plan, set forth and carried out according to the will of God.

In this Sunday’s first reading, Isaiah compares the vindication of God’s people to “a young man [marrying] a virgin” and “a bridegroom [rejoicing] in his bride.” In the Gospel a wedding serves as the setting when Jesus comes to his “hour,” reveals His glory and pours forth the wine of Messianic graces at the request of his “mother.”

The Wedding at Cana can, therefore, be seen as a metaphor-of-sorts

of Christ’s very passion and death (the only other scene in John’s Gospel in which the “mother” is present). After the Baptist’s prophetic heraldry, and his recognition of “the Lamb of God,” Jesus draws disciples to Himself. Then, at the proper hour, Jesus pours forth the grace or “wine” of messianic salvation at the request of his most ardent believers.

This is only one example of the rich symbolism contained in this story of the Wedding at Cana. Others, including the blind faith of “the mother” who knew Jesus would respond to her petitions, the stewards who followed His instructions, and the sanctification of the marriage covenant, would be appropriate subject matter for future reflections on one of the most multifaceted stories of Christ’s ministry.

Fr. William Nicholas  
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