

## Sunday 2.10

Perhaps this fact has escaped your attention, but if you look again at the beginning of John's Gospel you will see that he begins his Gospel with the same words used at the beginning of the first book of the Bible, Genesis: "In the beginning. . . ." What does that tell us? It tells us that John believes that with the coming of Jesus God is recreating the world. This is a new beginning. Genesis talks about six days of creation and then the seventh day, the day on which God rests after completing his creative work. John does the same thing in his Gospel. You can see that if you read his first chapter. He keeps repeating the words: "the next day, the next day, the next day. . . ." Then, at the beginning of the second chapter, he says: "On the third day. . . ." Since he has already named four days, this third day after them is actually the seventh day, and this is the day on which the marriage feast in Cana takes place. Thus this marriage feast represents for John the completion of the new creation. Here Jesus is revealed in his glory for the first time, and his disciples begin to believe in him. This is Jesus' first miracle, or what John calls his first sign, the first of seven signs which Jesus will perform in this Gospel.

There is a connection here between this marriage feast and our first reading from Isaiah. There Isaiah promises Israel that in the future God will make its land his spouse: “As a young man marries a virgin, your builder shall marry you; and as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so shall your God rejoice in you.” John sees the fulfillment of that promise in Jesus’ presence at this wedding feast where his glory, his power, is revealed for the first time. And we Christians follow his lead. We believe that in Jesus of Nazareth God has married not just Israel but the entire human race. That is what it means to believe in the Incarnation. In Jesus God and the human have been joined, married. The human and the divine have become one. This also means that we humans are called to be God-like. We do that by being like Jesus, for Jesus is both human and divine. And the second reading for today tells us how we can do that. The Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, takes hold of us and gives us different gifts, and in exercising these gifts we make our own lives divine lives, God-like lives, lives like the life of Jesus. It is a tall order, but we can do it because we don’t have to do it on our own. All we have to do is let the Holy Spirit take over our lives. All we have to do is try to do the good, just thing each day, and our lives will become infused with the divine, with Jesus.

If we now look at the scene which John gives us, this marriage in Cana of Galilee, we can see many things, for we know that every detail probably has a deeper meaning, is in itself a sign or symbol of a deeper, spiritual reality. Let me mention just two points in this story. The first is the way Jesus refers to his mother in this story. When she tells him that the wine has run out, he addresses her not as mother but as “Woman,” an unheard of way for a son to address his mother, something like a son today calling his mother “madam.” Formal, stand-offish, to say the least. Indeed, we are told that in the entire gospel of John Mary is never given her proper name. She is always “the mother of Jesus” or “Woman,” as here, and again at the foot of the cross when Jesus says to her: “Woman, behold your son. . . ,” referring to his disciple John. Why? Because Mary is the new Eve, the new woman, the new mother of the human race, the new mother of all her son’s disciples. She is the mother of the church.

The second point is the fact that Jesus orders the water jars to be filled to the brim, and there are six of them, each holding twenty to thirty gallons of water. That is a super-abundance of wine. What does John want to tell us here? Could it be that this is a sign, a symbol, of the super-abundance of God’s mercy and love for us in

this recreated world? There is compassion, mercy, love without measure, overflowing.

It is hard to hear this message at this moment when we are confronted with the images of the people of Haiti suffering death and destruction. We ask: Why? Why does God allow such natural disasters to take place? There is no answer to that question except the answer of faith, which is that God will bring good out of all this suffering and death. And if those in the midst of this tragedy can believe that—and many of them do—so can we.