

Sunday, January 17, 2016

Filling the Water Jars

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/011716.cfm>

Isaiah 62:1-5

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

John 2:1-11

The Second Sunday of Ordinary Time presents us with the wedding miracle at Cana in John's Gospel, continuing to center on the manifestation of the Lord, which was celebrated on the solemnity of the Epiphany. The feast of the Epiphany, the Baptism of the Lord, and the wedding miracle at Cana all clearly show us that Jesus is, in fact, the Son of God. The fact that divine power flows through Jesus, blessing humanity with God's presence and acceptance, is paramount in all three of these celebrations.

God blesses humanity. This is really the point of the Incarnation, the Word becoming flesh. God is not apart from human beings but one with them. This is an awesome point to ponder. God does not necessarily come through extraordinary or "beyond" human experiences but in the very stuff of life. He blesses us with his accepting presence and uses all that is authentically human to show us his divine love.

Our first reading from the prophet Isaiah really hits the point home! Isaiah speaks of God's relationship with his people using the language of endearment, tenderness, and love. Isaiah tells us: "No more shall people call you 'Forsaken,' or your land 'Desolate,' but you shall be called 'My Delight,' and your land 'Espoused.' For the LORD delights in you and makes your land his spouse... so shall your God rejoice in you." What beautiful imagery is used to describe God's relationship with us! This tender, caretaking, loving, and embracing God wants to show us something special about our human selves that may go unnoticed to our naked eyes. Using the eyes of faith, humanity bursts forth with divine life! All of those promptings toward life, love, joy, peace, hope, forgiveness, union, compassion, tenderness, and such are God trying to convince us that we are his delight! We are meant to rest in him.

I read a brief, almost unnoticed, article this past week about Gov. Andrew Cuomo signing an order requiring communities throughout the state of New York to [take homeless people from the streets to shelters when temperatures reach freezing](#). In pondering this gesture, one can wonder if the homeless know that God rejoices in them. When starving, cold, empty, lonely, hurting, feeling forsaken and desolate does an individual think that anyone, let alone God, delights in him or her? The situation of homelessness throughout the world is a complicated one. Sadly, many truly believe that the problem would really correct itself if they only found a job.



One thing many don't realize is that many homeless people do work! The work they can find and the work that they do certainly pays them an income but it is not sufficient to cover the cost of living effectively. Do we really believe the myth that a minimum wage job will provide an individual with housing? (For a more detailed analysis of this issue see: www.attn.com/stories/4920/united-states-minimum-wage-and-rent.)

Add to this problem issues with alcohol and drug addiction, mental illness, depression, lack of resources and support, and the "problem of homelessness" doesn't look so simple anymore. But who is going to tell these folks that God delights in them? That is the task of folks like you and I who know and believe that God delights in all of his children! And, guess what? Here is the other best kept secret! The Incarnation tells us that as divine power and love flows through and out of Jesus it also can flow through and out of all of us! We need to roll up our sleeves and walk with the homeless for a while and share, not judge, their story! God shares all of our stories and does not judge.

But what can I do? What gifts do I have to share? St. Paul answers that very question for the Corinthian community in what is part of a very long response he gives to their questions. He tells us, "To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit." The Spirit is given to each individual. St. Paul does not say "some"! What gifts has the Spirit given you? And, the greater question to be asked is: how can you use those gifts to show all of God's children that God delights in them and rejoices in them? No one person can resolve the situation of homelessness in our world. But if the issue can find its way on the agenda of every church in the world, we could certainly find ways to at least chip away at it!

We need to ensure that people's needs are met before Psalm 96 can be found on the lips of all God's children. "Sing to the LORD a new song... Sing to the LORD; bless his name... The LORD is king. He governs the peoples with equity." When people are in pain, the pain robs them of their ability to see anything other than what has their attention. When a person is cold, one searches for warmth. When a person is hungry, one searches for food. People are not dispensable and everyone is worthy of the dignity given to them by God... it is their right.

Jesus could have ignored his mother's intervention regarding the need for wine. "Woman, how does your concern affect me?" But he did not. Jesus did not allow the guests to go without and he took something ordinary and simple and made it into something extraordinary and beautiful—just like he does with each human soul and all God creates! But he asks for our cooperation because that is how the Spirit works. As we are told by St. Paul: "there are different forms of service but the same Lord." Jesus needed people to fill the water jars and he needed servers to distribute the water made wine.

Not much has changed since that day and the desire and the request are the same. Jesus wishes to share God's delight with all of his children in whatever way is necessary using whomever wishes to come forward and help. He needs some to fill the jars and others to distribute what is in them. We all have a part to play, even if it is being the one to request (or pray) for intervention. For many, life is too cold and it is too hard. It is not always their fault and there is no reason to condemn to a life on the street or a life without shelter. This is not God's desire and it does not need to be... not here, not anywhere.

If life ever affords you the opportunity to truly look a person who is desolate or homeless in the eye, remember what you see. You will see the same thing you see when you look in your mirror. And if you see the same thing when you look at and receive the Eucharist in your parish, then you will know you are espoused and that we are connected with one another and with God in a most incredible way.

Rev. Mark S. Suslenko

NOTICES

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

Catholic Schools Week is celebrated in the United States from January 25–31. Many parish communities hold special events in honor of Catholic Schools. For more information and for resources and ideas, visit:

<http://www.ncea.org/our-services/catholic-schools-week>

COLLECTION FOR THE CHURCH IN LATIN AMERICA

Many dioceses will take up the collection for the Church in Latin America the weekend of January 23–24. More information and collection resources are available at:

<http://usccb.org/catholic-giving/opportunities-for-giving/latin-america/collection/index.cfm>.

LPI customers can also find the resources on Art & Media Portal by searching keyword [“Church in Latin America”](#).

SPECIAL JUBILEE DAY OF THE HOLY YEAR OF MERCY

Share beautiful, vibrant art in your parish with a free bulletin cover from LPI. This special Holy Year of Mercy cover celebrates the World Day of Migrants and Refugees on January 17, 2016. To download visit LPI’s Art & Media Portal at www.portal.4LPi.com. You can also view the Holy Father’s message for the day here:

https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20150912_world-migrants-day-2016.html.

PRAYER

God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,

may you give to all Christians,

and especially to those entrusted with leadership in your Church,

the spirit of wisdom and revelation,

so that with the eyes of our hearts

we may see the hope to which you have called us:

one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

one God and Father of all,

who is above and through all and in all.

Amen.

—*Prayer for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute, www.geii.org*

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