

John 2:1-11

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Homily 144 Do whatever he tells you.

Is 62:1-5, Cor 12:4-11

*Do whatever he tells you.*

It was a beautiful spring Saturday and the church was packed. The couple soon to be married joined each other at the altar in front of the community and the presider, (I would have said deacon there, but I did not want to make it too personal.) Mark and Elizabeth were there to confirm the covenant of relationship, the covenant of Marriage. "Do you promise to take each other to be husband and wife, do you promise to be true to each other, in good time and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love and honor each other all the days of your lives?"

Joy rang out in the Church, people were nudging each other "aren't they a beautiful couple", more nudging "aren't they perfect for each other", more nudging "this relationship was made in heaven", then there is a standing ovation. For what God puts together let no put asunder.

Fast-forward 6 years. It is dreary, wet, cold day in late October, Mark and Elizabeth are meeting with Dr. Wilson; he is a Psychologist and marriage counselor. "It's just not working" Elizabeth states, "he is always working, he is not the man I though I married." Mark begs for a turn to present his case. "But Dr. you know these are hard times and it is only by working hard that you can get ahead in this world." Is this just one more marriage on the rocks?

The readings today are not about a marriage falling apart, it was just a wedding ill prepared. They ran out of wine, can you imagine going to a wedding and at the reception they start running out of things? Now they are nudging each other, "look they have run out of something to drink, I can't believe it they spend a year planning for this event. They invited everyone in the know. Perhaps they went broke on this wedding". (Weddings today are designed to make you go broke, or at least spend part of your retirement.) It is one of the biggest businesses in the country. Think about the wedding feast at Cana, a little town 3 miles from Nazareth where Mary lived. This was a 7-day event, with no more refreshments after they ran out. What an embarrassment. Jesus, who was related to the family, saved them from embarrassment by giving them the privilege of serving the finest wine. He transformed 120 gallons of water into wine; there must have been over 300 people at this reception. Sorry that's not the point.

The readings today are not only about running out, but they are about planning with our faith in mind. They are about celebrating the right things in our lives; they are about how God works in our life to make things work in our lives. They are about listening to what he tells you. They are about God's glory revealed in our lives through Jesus Christ. In the first reading Isaiah, often called the greatest of the prophets, probably because he had to deal with the tribe of Judah, is pleading with the people to listen to what God is telling them, not to the Egyptian Ambassador who was trying to convince

them to alliance against Assyria to launch an attack. Long story short they did not “listen to him”. The Assyrian did attack and surrounded Jerusalem, only when they were trapped, as Isaiah had foretold, did they listen and God came to their aid. It is the same in the Gospel reading today. Listen to him; listen to what Jesus tells you.

Biblical scholars bring a lot to this scripture reading for many reasons. It is the beginning of Jesus’ ministry; many refer to it as from Cana to Calvary. Cana summarizes Jesus’ whole ministry, his saving mission. The marriage between heaven and earth; between divinity and humanity; between God and us; between you and me. It is about how obedience leads to joy and happiness, listening leads to knowing, and believing leads to abundance.

Think about it, Jesus’ first miracle is at a wedding. Why? Is it because marriage is a typology of his relationship between Christ ‘the bridegroom’ and the Church his ‘Bride’? That is hard for some of us to understand, but it says that just as in the covenant of Marriage, it is where two become one and in so doing we can be to each other, through the grace of Christ, what no other can be. Christ’s covenant with the church, with each of us, is there to protect us and lead us to eternal life. But! But! We must listen to what he is telling us. In marriage, in relationship, we must listen to what each other are saying and what Christ is saying in our lives. We miss it! We don’t get life right. We don’t get marriage right. Why? Well as Mary the supreme intercessor shares, “Do what he tells you!”

So what are we called to do as a result of these readings today? First we are called to turn the ordinary into the extraordinary through the grace of Christ. Think water into wine. We are called to get life right. You say, “No, I cannot do this myself.” That’s right you cannot do anything on your own. We cannot do well, we cannot truly love, for love is not about the object of the love, but rather it is about the capacity to love. It is only through God’s intervention that we can do anything divine. Why do marriages succeed or fail? According to Dr. John Gottman, one of the reasons is the failure to learn what love really is. It is the capacity to love. Not the capacity to change the other person. In the midst of marriage prep a couple will admit that they don’t like something about the other person, then declare they will change that. (Honk) Wrong. Marriage is not a relationship you come into with the idea to change, but rather to be a change in yourself. In being changed, the marriage is transformed into a ministry of love. True love is getting life right. Loving without judgment is what transforms. It is obvious in the couples that are referred to me by the chancery office on marriage and family that the couple has not learned to love without and object to love. You love life, or you fail by only loving what happens to you in your life. You see that tragedy in that? That’s like people who think they have failed if they don’t have the right job or spouse. It is not about them, it is about you.

Second, anything without prayer has the odds against it. If we cannot do anything without God’s help and we wait till things are not what we want to pray, things won’t be what we want. We treat our faith and prayer, as Bishop Fulton Sheen would always say, like a parachute. We carry it until we need it, then we pull the cord hoping that it will soften the fall. Well, the problem is that we are not constantly repacking that shoot so that it is always ready. You say, “well I fulfill my obligation, I attend mass on Sunday.” I’m not talking about minimum standard; saints don’t live by minimum standard. Well, I’m no saint. Oh then you have decided that you are going to hell. You see all people who attain eternal life, heaven, are saints. It is a general term, not just some pious reflection on those who we solemnly declare are in heaven. I hope that you are declaring sainthood. For it is a declaration of faith, and desire in eternal life. We should be all working on sainthood. Meeting minimum standards is not what we are talking about here. True

prayer is not words or liturgies; true prayer is not praying on occasion, or attending Mass under the minimum obligation. It is turning our lives into prayer, turning our marriages into prayer. It is simply living our faith 24/7; it is living our call 24/7. You say, "I don't know what my call is". Well, then you are living the ordinary life, as the gospel says, "you are water and Christ is trying to transform you into the extraordinary". Is your life and marriage and relationships ordinary or extraordinary, are you water or wine?

The answer is in Paul's letter to the affluent people in Corinth, the wealthy seaport town. Are we living the gifts God has given us to do good or are we squandering them on attaining things of this world for our own happiness? Most of us find happiness, which does not sustain us, when we are challenge by life, health, or career. We should be seeking joy by developing a relationship with Christ through prayer. There are four steps to pray: first give glory (that is what we do at Mass), then give thanks (that's what we do by sharing our gifts with others), third seek meaning (that's what we do by learning, refection and retreats), then the fourth is to ask for things. Unfortunately, most of us ask for things first. That is why we don't think we get our prayers answered. The things we get are not what we prayed for. Well I did not pray for this, I did not pray for this job. I did not pray for this paint. I don't deserve this. Why God? Why me? Sound familiar? No, pray for meaning! Oh Lord, help me to understand the meaning to my life! What am I to learn from what is happening to me? This wonderful community brings us opportunities to get to know the meaning of our lives. Great liturgies, bible studies, and reflections. Like we will have next Saturday. The Men and Women's refection's are a great opportunity to learn about our faith and learn about ourselves so that we can "Get Life Right!" I will be doing the Men's retreat based on my new book which just came out yesterday by Liguori Press. *Get out of the boat! Discover the Meaning to you Life*. It is about getting to know what you should be doing in your life. It is about learning about yourself by seeing yourself as God sees you, though the help of Jesus Christ. It is about hearing Jesus by getting out of your life to walk with him.

It is about what Mary said to the waiters at the wedding of Cana.

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