

I love being a wedding guest and more, I love going to the reception. I adore the silly dances: the chicken dance, the hokey pokey, the bunny hop, the macarana - even a brisk polka. If music is playing, you can count on me being on the dance floor. I also enjoy the sit down meal, not necessarily for the food, but for the stranger who is at my table at the beginning of the meal who becomes my newest and most interesting friend by the end of the meal. Let's face it, wedding are just plain fun.

I don't like weddings as much if I am officiating. The expectations are so high, the drama is always present, nerves are frayed and something always goes wrong during the wedding ceremony. Sometimes, things go wrong during the reception - a guest gets a little too tipsy, the wedding cake topples over, the caterer drops a load of dishes, the possibilites of what could go wrong are almost endless.

It must have been like that in Jesus' day as well. While honeymoons were not yet part of the culture, a wedding was then,

as it is now, a major celebration and they often lasted an entire week. Imagine then, the consternation and the shame of the host that the wine had run out. I imagine that the face of the father of the bride or groom went very pale as the implications of this serious social faux pas set in. And how astute of the mother of Jesus to notice the situation and quietly take Jesus aside and ask him to do something about it.

It appears that Jesus was not expecting this request. Like our story last week of Jesus' baptism, Jesus is just one out of many guests. He isn't the guest of honor, yet his presence there is fortuitous. Although he may have whispered through gritted teeth, "not now, Mom, I'm not ready," Mary understood that Jesus had to be faithful to his inner calling from God and not necessarily responsive to a request by any human authority, not even if that authority is his mother.¹ Mary knew that Jesus would be responsive

¹ Ernest Hess, "Homeletical Perspective," *Feasting on the Word, Year C vol. 1*, David L. Bartlett & Barbara Brown Taylor, eds., (John Knox Press: Louisville, KY) 2009, 261.

to God, and thus she could say with confidence to the servant,

“Darling, just do what he says.”

Now what happens next is that Jesus converts a staggering amount of water into wine. More water is turned into wine than can be safely attributed to some magic trick. The amount of wine that Jesus created is equivalent to 1000 bottles of the finest wine.

1000 bottles!

The amount of wine is beyond extravagant. There is more than enough for everyone. Everyone can have his or her fill. Jesus has prevented shame upon the family and Jesus has ensured that a good time can be continued to be enjoyed by all. How lovely is it that John gives us a portrait of Jesus by showing us that God is interested in providing us with laughter and joy, that God’s grace is overflowing and available to one and all. No one is left out. God’s grace is there for everyone. If we truly believe this, then our lives together, in worship and in fellowship, will amply reflect an atmosphere of welcome and well-being and reflective of God’s great love for us.

The question for us becomes: where is our focus? Do we focus on whatever it is we lack? Or do we seek to have our fill in Jesus? Are we able to follow Mary's instructions to do whatever Jesus tells us? Are we willing to place our needs into Jesus' hands and see what miracle will be brought forth? These are good questions to ask ourselves as we approach our annual meeting.

It cannot be lost on anyone in this space that the last time we saw Sherrill was at the Annual Meeting. The pain of her loss may be especially acute today as we remember that last time together as a parish family. I hope we remember that Sherrill presided at the altar with a real sense of joy. She truly celebrated the Eucharist knowing that Jesus has liberated all of us from the fear of death. She would be proud to see how well the ministries of this parish have flourished. She would be so proud of the wardens, the vestry and the various ministry leaders who shepherded our parish through this time of crisis. She would be grateful that the Bishop and others at the Diocese have offered a great deal of assistance to us. She

would be pleased to know that she is one of the saints upon whose shoulders we now stand as we move into 2016.

I think it would be her hope for us that we seek to have our fill in Jesus, that we will seek the gifts of the Holy Spirit such that together, with our individual gifts, we benefit our entire community. I think that today she would want us to know the joy that comes with wedding celebrations, of hopeful expectations, of real well being when we gather together for lunch, confident that there is enough of God's grace for each of us. If we have our fill in Jesus, we can face the uncertainties that the coming year is likely to bring without fear. If we do what Jesus tells us to do, we will experience the God of mercy, peace and joy. May our "marriage" with St. George's produce fruit of such great abundance that we are obvious messengers of God's grace.