

Harvest Festival & The Wedding at Cana

Harvest is one of the most beautiful times in the church year.
We all are dressed in colourful clothes. We all are cheerful and excited.
And we come together to offer our thanks to a caring and loving God.
We are thankful for God's goodness and care, and we see the fruits of the earth as an image for all that God has given to us throughout the seasons of the past year.
We give thanks for all that helps us live day by day, and we ask God to crown our lives with his grace and abundance.
We understand that God wants us to see our lives as a feast, as a celebration of all the good things given to us: food and clothes, friends and our faith, hope and dreams...
... and where can we see that best?
At a party of course...

So I chose for my sermon today the story of a party.
Not any party but a very special one.
A party with which the Gospel of John almost begins.
... a party that shows where Jesus leads his friends and what kind of life he wants to offer to them.
I would like to reflect with you a bit on the Wedding at Cana.

It all begins with five men who'd just decided to follow Jesus:
Andrew and John, Simon, Philip and Nathaniel, so John tells us.
And where is Jesus leading them?
One could imagine that he would lead them into the desert, somewhere to meditate or pray together. But, in fact, he takes them to a party, a wedding feast!

Jesus goes to the wedding to celebrate; he is so wonderfully human.
He goes there to be with his family and friends, all the people he knew from Nazareth and the surrounding area.

It is important to understand that at that time in Israel weddings feasts were grand events and lasted a week. There was a lot of eating and drinking, singing and dancing.
People enjoyed being with friends.
People celebrated the love of God, the love of two young people, and the love they had for each other.
Jesus takes his first followers to a feast of love.
He shows them all his vision of loving relationships between people...

They had come to celebrate and have a great time together.
But there is some drama.

Mary, who is behind the scenes, perhaps helping, notices that there is no more wine.

“They have no more wine...”

This, of course, is enormously humiliating to the hosts.

Mary is very sensitive to the suffering of the poor.

Here are two families, probably quite poor, about to be humiliated because there is no more wine. So Mary goes to find Jesus and tells him: “They have no more wine...”

And Jesus replies, “Woman, what is there between you and me? My time has not yet come.”

What on earth does he mean?

Do we here see the point in Jesus’ life at which the private person becomes the man of God? ...at which the family man leaves the village and attends to the work of God, announcing to the world the message of love, forgiveness, and the value of each person?

It may well be.

We don’t know how much of this Mary understands, but she has so much confidence in her son that she goes to the servants and tells them: “Do whatever he says!” And they accept.

Jesus tells the servants to fill six large jars to the top with water. The servants, a bit surprised, hurry back and forth from the well to fill the jars. It must have taken many buckets, and they were probably tired.

But for miracles to take place, people are needed who stretch beyond the ordinary and obvious...

The servants then bring the water changed into wine to the master of ceremonies, who tastes it and is astonished. To the bridal couple he says: “You have saved the best wine until now? Usually the best wine is served at the beginning, and then when the guests are a little drunk, the cheaper wine is served.”

Jesus gives his very best, and his disciples, says the story, believed in him.

They understand that with Jesus, there is always an abundance of gifts and of love!

The most profound meaning of the story of Cana is the sign of transformation of water into wine.

We are each called to love.

We are called to change all the time and become more loving.

We need to be transformed...

Our water needs to be turned into wine...

Our hearts of fear must be changed into hearts of love.

Our cold hearts must become warm, our closed doors and minds must become wide open, our shy attempts to life in all its fullness must change into bold and big efforts inviting everyone into the Kingdom of our wonderful God.

We are all made for love and to grow in love.
We are all beautiful and precious in the eyes of God.
We are all invited to the wedding feast – every day of our individual lives.
Deep within we are all made for joyful celebrations!

Weddings and meals are important and precious images to us, - tables as well.
So we are all invited to sit at God's lovingly prepared table and rejoice with each other.

We are invited to share and give, to eat and drink and have our fill.
At God's table we are entering into friendship with each other and with him.
At his table we break down walls that separate people from each other
and work for unity, understanding and peace.

Jesus takes his friends to the wedding at Cana to reveal to them what life there is
with him: ordinary water turned into the most delicious wine.
Taste and see, he seems to say, with me you are as blessed as one can be. You are
not just living your life, you are celebrating it – every day and every hour!

The wedding feast is a sign of heaven: it is love and it is relationship.
To live this relationship, the water of our humanity must gradually be transformed
by the Holy Spirit into the wine of love.
That's what we are made for.

Those who love truly, love others as they are, for themselves and freely.
And Jesus helps us and shows us how to do so.
He takes us to wedding feasts...
He offers himself to be united with us so that we can completely fulfil our mission
and vocation as his people.
Jesus does not want to possess or control us, he wants to liberate us and fill us with
happiness and peace.
He wants us to celebrate!
And he celebrates with us!

The wedding feast at Cana speaks to us today when we celebrate our colourful
Harvest Festival.
It speaks to all of us from so many corners of the world, and invites us to life-long
work for and celebration of unity and peace.
Let us do that today – nothing more and nothing less.
Let us sing for joy and dance with God and share our food.
Let us love, and love, and love again...
Amen.