

In this week's Gospel, John 2:1-11, we find the last recorded words of our Blessed Mother: "Do whatever he [Jesus] tells you." Never has any mother given more sound advice to her children! Mary spoke these words to the servers at the wedding at Cana. We know the story: Mary had brought her concern to Jesus, "They have no wine." Jesus responded, "Woman, how does your concern affect me?" Evidently, her concern *did* affect Jesus because a few minutes later Jesus turned about 150 gallons of water into the finest of wines! This was Jesus' first miracle; what was the result? The Gospel says his glory was revealed and "his disciples began to believe in him" (vs. 11).

Of course, volumes have been written on the significance of Jesus' first miracle and there are numerous ramifications. Here, I would like to consider a simple yet important aspect of Jesus' first miracle: it inspired joy.

In the first century, Jewish nuptial festivities lasted a week and were called in Aramaic *mištîṭâ* (drink-festival). In connection with these "drink-festivals" there arose a rabbinical dictum: "Where there is no wine, there is no joy" [Leonard, W. (1953). *The Gospel of Jesus Christ according to St John, A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (D. B. Orchard & E. F. Sutcliffe, Ed.) (983). Thomas Nelson]. Thus, among all the consequences of Jesus' miracle there is one simple effect: it brought joy to the bride and groom and all the guests—it enabled them to fittingly celebrate one of the great joys of life: marriage. The fact is, Jesus came that we might have life and have it more abundantly (Jn 10:10). The first two fruits of the spirit are love and joy (Gal 5:22); "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17).

So just as the wine enabled all present at the wedding to celebrate life, so the "new wine" – the wine of the Holy Spirit – enables the Christian soul to discover and celebrate the true meaning of life and experience it with "joy in the Holy Spirit." The miracle which inspired joy would not have happened if not for Mary's concern and her intercession; at the same time, the obedience of the servants who did what Jesus commanded by filling the jars with water was also a necessary prerequisite. As at the wedding at Cana, the supernatural joy which only Jesus can supply is contingent upon the intercession and obedience of God's children. Ultimately, Mary's simple exhortation is not only the key to a happy, meaningful, life on earth; but it is also the key to the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal life: "Do whatever he tells you!" This is the recipe for the miracle of spiritual joy.

Your Servant in Christ,  
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