

Homily. 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.C. 19/20 January 2019.

The public ministry of Jesus and our Ordinary Time weeks begin with a party and a problem. Let's start with the party. It was an important cultural and social event for the Jews of the time, a wedding at Cana in Galilee to which Jesus, Mary and the disciples were all invited. Weddings were then, as they still are today, costly events for the families concerned.

More so than today though, they were costly, too, for the guests who had to take days away from paid work and a lot of trouble to attend, stay over and then make the trek back home. Nevertheless, in those days before fast transport and speedy communication, weddings were vital to the entire community for meeting relatives and friends, sharing news and good times, and hopefully making matches for the as yet unattached.

Now, to the problem. At this point in St. John's gospel all that we know is that Jesus had been Baptised by John in the Jordan, and while still living in Galilee most likely with Mary, He'd called a few disciples to follow Him. So far Jesus hadn't launched out on His own mission. When the wine ran out, a situation of private embarrassment and public shame for the families in front all their guests, Jesus wasn't inclined to do anything about the matter, claiming that His time to act, His 'Hour' hadn't yet come.

Mary thought differently. Basically, she ignored her son's hesitancy, yet trusting Him to do the right and good thing, directed the stewards to "Do whatever He tells you." Mary expected Jesus to act, preventing a disaster. In a way Mary was saying that she knew her son and His 'Hour'

better than He. Her intercession worked, and it worked spectacularly and with overflowing abundance. Jars of water of 20 to 30 gallons, something between 90 and 130 litres, became wine and not just any old wine, but the best wine ever. Everything was put right in a way no one foresaw.

In St. John's story this was the first sign given by Jesus, a sign of who He really was, what He was about and what His mission would mean for the world. Wine, now as then, a drink of joy, friendship and celebration meant that God's plan for humanity was unfolding apace. Joy, community and fellowship were the order of the day at Cana and the beginning of this Spirit for everyone. Only the finger of God could have wrought such a work and that finger, that Spirit, was active in Jesus in a definitive manner. Embarrassment and shame were banished and right order saved from its peril. This is what Jesus would be on about from that moment onwards.

St. Paul says that we all have a share in Jesus Spirit working in different ways in each of us, but always acting for the common good and to the greater glory of God. Yet, the fact remains that our humanity and misdirection all too readily imperils the proper working of the Holy Spirit amongst us. We get proud, arrogant, lazy, tired and greedy or become crippled by shame and self-doubt, amongst other faults and failings.

This truth reminds us that we all need renewal in Jesus and in the life of His Spirit. The Mass, our prayer, bible reading and reflection, the regular and faithful celebration of the Sacraments and using our gifts for the betterment of others are the usual ways that we let the Spirit fill us and

free us for our mission. Renewal groups and opportunities to share, learn about and deepen our faith are another tried and tested method for refreshing us in the Lord and in the gifts of His Spirit.

This weekend in our Parish you, and I mean all of you; younger, older, men and women, people who've been here forever and those who've arrived last month, in a nutshell, everybody, is invited to consider responding positively to the invitation to try the ALPHA experience. The page on your seats is for you to take home with you, pray over and consider seriously. I can only urge you to 'give it a go' in true Aussie fashion, remembering that if nothing's ventured, nothing is ever gained.

There's little of value to be found in complaining that we want a better world, society, Church and Parish if we're not then prepared to then do something to make this happen. ALPHA is the wine that's on tap for us right now, a way that does help our renewal and refreshment in the overflowing abundance of God's gifts. So, take the leaflet and the chance being offered you. It could change you, and through you many others, bringing the wine of joy and marriage in Jesus as God intends for us all.