

2019 SECOND SUNDAY

Twenty seven years ago I visited Cana. It is a miniscule Village- about 8 kilometres from Nazareth. The streets are so windy and so narrow that our bus could not enter it. We were dropped off on one side of the Village and told to meet the bus on the opposite side. It takes only a few minutes to walk from one side of Cana to the other. Right in the middle of the Village is a simple but well-loved Church, run by the Franciscans marking the spot where the Wedding Feast was held. It is hugely popular for Catholic Weddings. And of course as you leave the Church- right across the road- is a shop which does a flourishing business selling Cana Wine.

Cana in Our Lord's day would have been no different than it is today.... a no-where place... populated by people struggling to eke out frugal lives.

For them a Wedding Feast would have been a wondrous occasion; a bright and joyous festival in an otherwise drear existence. People would have come to enjoy the feast to the full- because tomorrow it would be back onto the usual diet of barley bread and dried fish.

It was no surprise that the hosts ran out of wine. They would have been poor people and probably would have taken out a crippling loan to pay for the Feast. They were skint. What they provided was all the money-lenders would credit to them.

And so right from the very beginning of His ministry Jesus reveals His special empathy and love for the little people of His society. In working the miracle Jesus knew that the hosts were about to suffer significant social embarrassment. He had compassion on them.

And so it was that in dinky, Cana- with the encouragement of His Mother- Jesus began His public ministry.

That Jesus' public ministry should have begun at a Wedding Feast rings all types of bells for St. John, the Gospel Writer.

For him it was a hugely significant moment- the culmination of over a thousand years of history, going right back to the days of Abraham and Sarah. It was a moment millions of Jews had prayed for over the centuries.

For from the moment Moses offered sacrifice at the base of Mt Sinai, Israel had always understood herself to be bonded in an eternal covenant of marriage with God. And now -with the coming of the Messiah- finally it would surely come apparent to all people of goodwill- that Israel was married to God. They were Bride and Bridegroom.

As we heard in the 1st Reading from Isaiah: “Like a young man marrying a virgin, so the One who built you as a nation has wed you. And as the bridegroom rejoices in the bride, so God rejoices in you.”

At Cana, Jesus served the very best of wine- all 150 gallons of it- to celebrate the beginning of the Messianic era- the coming to fruitfulness of the marriage between Israel and God.

But St John would have us go much deeper.

For St John, the Wedding Feast of Cana foreshadowed the Last Supper. At Cana, water was changed into wine. At the Last Supper, wine would be changed into the living presence of Jesus, Himself.

The Last Supper manifested the new marriage, the new covenant between Jesus, the Bridegroom, and His Bride, the Church. Every Mass celebrates this marriage and makes it present once again.

At Mass, an even more precious wine is drunk- the Risen Christ- to celebrate the marriage between Jesus and the Church.

The people of Cana came to the Wedding Feast with a hearty appetite and a good thirst. They came to celebrate the marriage of a couple they loved and to enjoy themselves thoroughly.

Their spirit is one we should all try to imitate when we come to Mass. Because we come to celebrate our marriage to Christ. We come longing to eat and drink of the Eucharist which bonds us with our Bridegroom. We come to meet friends, new and old. And- please God- we go home with songs of joy in our hearts.

Pope St John Paul II acknowledged the importance of the Wedding Feast of Cana by making it the 2nd Luminous Mystery of the Rosary.

The Wedding Feast of Cana is a celebration of the sanctity of Marriage. Jesus by His presence and intervention at Cana, blessed marriage for all time. Cana highlights the power of Mary as an intercessor and gives to us her last recorded words: “Do whatever my Son tells you to do.” But most of all it foreshadows Holy Thursday, the day of new wine when a new covenant was created between God and humanity at the Last Supper and sealed on the Cross- a covenant made real at every Mass. It prepares us for the wondrous gift given to us by our generous God- the gift of the Eucharist. Which in itself is a mere foretaste of the heavenly wedding feast that awaits us all because of the dying and rising of Jesus.