

SUNDAY 02 - C

“Transformation through Faith”

(Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 96; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; John 2:1-12)

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Cardinal John Henry Newman once said, “To live is to change; to have lived well is to have changed much.”

My brothers and sisters, pray for transformative faith in Jesus.

We have just completed the Christmas season and today are celebrating the second Sunday of Ordinary time. The gospel for today, however, assures us that no time is ordinary when we believe in Jesus. Humble genuine faith in Jesus involves us in an extraordinary process of daily, continual transformation.

The Old Testament reading for today and the Psalm provide us with a broad context for the gospel account. The prophet Isaiah proclaims a renewed Jerusalem (for us a Church) enjoying a marital relationship with God. The Psalm speaks of God’s marvellous deeds that we know are accomplished in Christ. The gospel then shows us Christ in action, transforming water into wine.

This passage from the gospel of John is layered with meaning. Let us examine some of the highlights. First, the lectionary omits to mention that this event happens on the third day, pointing to the end of the gospel where Jesus will rise from the dead on the third day. This passage, then, alludes to the newness of life that Jesus will bring about by his death and resurrection, the Paschal Mystery.

Second, John points out very deliberately that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there. Her role is pivotal in this first of Jesus’ miracles. As Mary was present at the foot of the cross, where Jesus sheds his blood for us, so she is present here, where he transforms water into wine so that we might believe in him.

The fact that he addresses her as “woman” alludes to that fact that she is the new Eve, the mother of a new creation that reverses the fall of humanity. It also allows her to step back from her role as the mother of Jesus, so that she can step forward into her new role as the first and perfect disciple, the one who first believes in Jesus and who helps the other disciples also believe in him. “Listen to him; do what he tells you,” are not only her words to the servants, but also to us as his disciples today.

Third, the fact that there are six water jars resonates with Hebrew numerology that held the number six to be a very weak number that never makes it to seven. The meaning here is that the old rituals and religion of the Jews can never transform humanity; this number points to the possibility of a seventh jar – fullness and perfection, who is Jesus himself.

Later in the gospel, at another table, Jesus invites us to be grafted onto another source of life, joy, beauty, covenant, and energy – Jesus himself, he who is the real vine. Grafted unto this vine, we will have within us the potential to produce fruit in and out of season, to tap into the seventh jar.

The use of these water jars indicates that the old ways of ritual purification are being replaced by the inner transformation that the Spirit of Jesus will bring. The drinking of wine in that culture did not have the association with alcoholism and alcohol abuse it does today. Jesus' provision of an ample amount of wine puts him in the place of a host, generously and graciously providing "new wine of inner transformation" for his guests, those who will believe in him.

This new, choice, finest of wines that Jesus gives totally transforms the old water of formalized religion into a relationship with God characterized by joy and abundance. Everything is meant to emphasize the extravagance of the miracle that is to take place.

New wine is created in the "old" vessels of the Jewish purification rites, symbolizing that the old forms are given new content. This miracle is neither a rejection nor a replacement of the old, but the creation of something new in the midst of Judaism. The extravagant proportions here anticipate the extravagant proportions of the feeding of the five thousand.

Fourth, the reference to it not being his time is a clear reference by Jesus to his hour on the cross where he will accomplish the Father's will to show us the depth of the Father's love. It also asserts that nothing will dissuade Jesus from his mission to do only the Father's will.

We are transformed by following Jesus through the paschal mystery. That is why Jesus answers so mysteriously to Mary's request. He was saying, "You want a miracle. The real miracle is not turning water to more wine; it is the cross and resurrection, his hour, his moment of total obedience to the Father out of love.

Do we dare to follow Jesus through passion, death, resurrection, appearances, ascension and Pentecost in our own lives? That means dealing with the hurts in our lives through forgiveness, and facing the loss in our lives through grieving and letting go.

Someone who has undergone a deep transformation through faith is Jonathon. A government worker, he had suffered for years working under a racist boss who tried every trick in the book to get him fired, just because he was native. On the way to a Cursillo one day, Jonathon started to get second thoughts, and headed south to the nearest city instead. Just then the song, "The Old Rugged Cross" came on the radio, and for some reason, Jonathon started to cry. The song touched his heart, and he decided to turn back and go to the Cursillo after all. There, through the talks, prayer, fellowship and celebration of reconciliation, he learned all about forgiveness. He thought about his racist boss who for eight years had tried to make life miserable for him and kept looking for a way to fire him. For the first time, he was able to understand that the man was sick and

prejudiced, and was able to let go of his anger towards him. When Jonathon got home, he phoned him up, thanked him for making life miserable for him, and told him that he forgave him. His boss was silent and couldn't even say a word, but the next Sunday, he was in church for the first time in years.

It is worth noting that the two miracles of transformation (wine into water, and the multiplication of bread and fish) placed near the beginning of the gospel of John speak of the Eucharist as the central sacrament of transformation.

In fact it is by really living out two sacraments - our baptism and the Eucharist, that we will be transformed. The water of baptism, and the wine of the Eucharist are powerful symbols today calling us to really, sincerely, live out our baptism and the Eucharist in our lives, and we will be transformed into other Christ's.

So, to experience the new wine of the Kingdom of God, pray for transformative faith in Jesus.