

Peace to you brothers and sisters,

In today's Gospel, we hear of the wedding feast at Cana. In listening to this story, you may have been put off by the interaction between Jesus and his mother, Mary. Now, I am not privy to everyone's situation, but I certainly can say without reservation that if I had ever responded to one of my mother's requests by saying "Woman, how does your concern affect me?" I would not be standing here today.

What an odd response from Jesus. We know, of course that Jesus is without sin, and that he is God, so by definition whatever He does is good, and an act of God. So how are we to understand this seemingly unprovoked and brash statement.

I think a few things can help us here. The first is for us to go back to the original Greek text. In the Greek this line reads differently than the English translation that we read from the New American Bible. The Greek text literally translates to, "Woman, what to you and to me is this concern?"

The second thing that we must keep in mind is that this is not being spoken in 21st century America. You see, in our culture if anyone, but especially a man, were to refer to someone as "woman" instead of by her name, it would rightly be taken in as a derogatory comment. But that was not is going on here. Jesus is not making a derogatory comment to his mother. After all, we know from other Gospel passages that he was obedient to his mother. So in order to understand this passage, we need to set aside our linguistic biases, and look deeper. By using the title woman, Jesus is not intending disrespect to his mother. He's not intending to objectify her. No, he addressing her with the title of Eve, and establishing her as the New Eve.

Now this is important, because Christ himself is the New Adam. Paul tell us this in Romans 5. So what we have is the New Adam and New Eve. With this in mind, let's look at how we can interpret this statement. In the eyes of faith this statement now reads like this, "How does this concern the New Adam and the New Eve?" Or put another way, how does this concern the redemption of humanity?

Now let's not forget we're reading from John's Gospel, which is highly symbolic. So the fact that this story takes place at a wedding isn't just John setting the stage for us; it has symbolic meaning. In scripture, the relationship between God and His people is often described as a marriage. We heard this in the first reading from Isaiah, "For the LORD delights in you and makes your land his spouse. As a young man marries a virgin, your Builder shall marry you; and as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so shall your God rejoice in you."

So let's put these images together. The New Eve, through whom the sin of the original Eve will begin to be undone, comes to the New Adam, the redeemer of humanity, at a wedding, and says there is no more wine. It's as if she is saying these people can't sustain this wedding feast. The New Adam responds, "How does this concern the mission to bring about redemption?" Friends pay attention to what happens. The New Eve undoes the sin of the original Eve. Rather than disobey God as the original Eve did, Mary, the New Eve responds, "Do whatever He tells you."

What ensues is, of course, one of the most notable miracles in the Gospels. The water is turned into wine. But not just any wine, a fine wine. As one priest I talked with earlier said, this isn't Yellow Tail that Jesus gave them. Symbolically what we learn is that God is so in love with His people, that even though the people are incapable of sustaining the wedding feast themselves, He will provide what is

necessary to keep the party going. Not only that, but what He provides will not be the minimum, it won't be Yellow Tail, no, it will be the finest wine.

So now that we have shed some light on this Gospel passage, we need to look at how this affects us, 21st century Americans. Let me suggest the following. Vatican II reminds us that we, the Church, are the Body of Christ. And as such, we are to imitate Christ, and carry out his saving work.

Right now, in our world, there are people who are not only without wine, but without water, and shelter, and have little if any reason to celebrate anymore. Specifically, I am thinking about the people in Haiti. As the body of Christ, we have been given a message – they have no more wine. As those who are charged with continuing Christ's saving work in the world, we need to respond.

We cannot turn water into wine as Jesus did. But we can use our resources to keep the wedding feast alive. In fact, as Christ's body, it is our duty to keep the feast going. Today we will have a second collection for the people in Haiti, many of whom lost everything – I urge you to be generous. After all, we are not seeking to provide them Yellow Tail. No, as the Body of Christ, we want to give them a fine wine.

But I'd like to offer one more suggestion. While our monetary resources are certainly necessary, we also need to think deeper about how we can help. Like Jesus, we must ask, "How does this concern affect the role we play in salvation history. Friends, take this question seriously. We have an opportunity as the Body of Christ to let the world know of God's love for His people. We have the opportunity to let people know that God is present even in situations that are devastating, even in situations where it seems the wedding feast has come to an end.

In order to do this, I am suggesting that we give more than our financial resources. We need to use this time to enter into solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Haiti. Our theology teaches us that salvation is brought about by God entering into solidarity with humanity. Similarly, by entering into solidarity with those who have lost hope, we can be instruments of salvation in our world.

So how do we enter into solidarity with the people in Haiti? Well, ultimately that is up for each one of us to decide. But, let me share with you what I am doing, not to pat myself on the back, but for the purpose of 1) allowing you to hold me accountable, and 2) to give you specific ideas as to what you can do. I decided that this week I am going to fast from lunch. Rather than spend a half hour eating, I am going to spend that time in prayer for the people of Haiti. I also made a deliberate decision this past Friday, which is my day off, to spend no money (usually I eat out) and to give the money I would normally spend on myself to the people in Haiti, who do not have the luxury of a day off, or food on demand. I am not suggesting that everybody has to do the same thing as me. Some of you may wish to pray a rosary, others may fast from TV or radio, or you may have thought of something else all together. But I am suggesting that in order to make our response to the need in Haiti a fine wine, it has to be more than simply pulling money out of our wallets. It has to have spiritual meaning as well. Giving \$5 is great. It's meeting the need. Giving \$5 that was going to go towards your morning Starbucks is better, its a fine wine, that puts you in solidarity with those who quite literally have nothing. I hope that, as a Church, we will imitate Christ and give the people of Haiti that same fine wine that Jesus gave us. The fine wine that comes from self-sacrifice. God Bless.