

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

The Second Sunday in Ordinary Time —Year C

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“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time - C

Reading I

Isaiah 62:1-5

For Zion's sake I will not be silent,
for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet,
until her vindication shines forth like the dawn
and her victory like a burning torch.

Nations shall behold your vindication,
and all the kings your glory;
you shall be called by a new name
pronounced by the mouth of the LORD.
You shall be a glorious crown in the hand of the LORD,
a royal diadem held by your God.
No more shall people call you "Forsaken,"
or your land "Desolate,"
but you shall be called "My Delight,"
and your land "Espoused."
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.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 96:1-2, 2-3, 7-8, 9-10

R. (3) Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all you lands.

Sing to the LORD; bless his name.

R. Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Announce his salvation, day after day.
Tell his glory among the nations;
among all peoples, his wondrous deeds.

R. Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Give to the LORD, you families of nations,
give to the LORD glory and praise;
give to the LORD the glory due his name!

R. Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Worship the LORD in holy attire.
Tremble before him, all the earth;
Say among the nations: The LORD is king.
He governs the peoples with equity.
R. Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Reading II

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Brothers and sisters:
There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit;
there are different forms of service but the same Lord;
there are different workings but the same God
who produces all of them in everyone.
To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit
is given for some benefit.
To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom;
to another, the expression of knowledge according to the
same Spirit;
to another, faith by the same Spirit;
to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit;
to another, mighty deeds;
to another, prophecy;
to another, discernment of spirits;
to another, varieties of tongues;
to another, interpretation of tongues.
But one and the same Spirit produces all of these,
distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.

Alleluia

2 Thessalonians 2:14

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
God has called us through the Gospel
to possess the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

John 2:1-11

There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee,
and the mother of Jesus was there.
Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding.
When the wine ran short,
the mother of Jesus said to him,
“They have no wine.”
And Jesus said to her,
“Woman, how does your concern affect me?
My hour has not yet come.”
His mother said to the servers,
“Do whatever he tells you.”
Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings,
each holding twenty to thirty gallons.
Jesus told them,
“Fill the jars with water.”
So they filled them to the brim.
Then he told them,
“Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.”
So they took it.
And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine,
without knowing where it came from
— although the servers who had drawn the water knew —,
the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him,
“Everyone serves good wine first,
and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one;
but you have kept the good wine until now.”
Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs at Cana in Galilee
and so revealed his glory,
and his disciples began to believe in him.

Exegesis

Isaiah 62:1-5

Our pericope is taken from *Third Isaiah* or *Trito-Isaiah*. The Israelite people have returned from the Exile and are tasked with the rebuilding of their temple, their city and their lives. “They shall rebuild the ancient ruins, the former wastes shall raise up and restore the ruined cities, desolate now for generations.” (Is 61:4). Throughout this time of the Exile, as in other eras, the Prophets warned that Israel had become unfaithful to Yahweh, like a harlot bride. Much earlier (786-746) the Prophet Hosea warned, “Go, take a harlot wife and harlot’s children, for the land gives itself to harlotry, turning away from the Lord.” (Hos 1:2). Hosea promises that despite Israel’s infidelity to Yahweh, He will remain faithful: “So, I will allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart. From there I will give her the vineyards she had, and the valley of Achor as a door of hope. She shall respond there as in the days of her youth, when she came up from the land of Egypt. On that day, says the Lord, She shall call Me ‘My husband,’ and never again ‘My Baals.’” (Hos 2:16-18).

God, through the Prophet Isaiah assured the people that He would remain faithful despite their infidelity. “But Zion said, ‘The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.’ Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you.” (Is 49:14-15). “Thus says the Lord: Where is the bill of divorce with which I dismissed your mother?” (Is 50:1). “I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul; For He has clothed me with a robe of salvation, and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, like a bride bedecked with her jewels. (Is 61:10).

Our passage is titled *Jerusalem the Lord’s Bride*. Adulterous Israel is to be restored to the joy of its youth, as newlyweds. The love of God is full of mercy and forgiveness. This unconditional love is to be held as a light, a burning torch for all to see. Jerusalem is to be a light shining on the highest hill to draw all toward this profound union with God. It is God who is now rejoicing in his bride returned to Him. “As a young man marries a virgin, your Builder shall marry you; As a bridegroom rejoices in his bride so shall your God rejoice in you.” (Is 62:5). The truth is, Israel is not a virgin, it is an idolatrous and unfaithful people, sinners in need of mercy and forgiveness. God seeks them out and wants to be in a deep, personal, espousal relationship with them anyway! Such is His love!

Exegesis (Continued)

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

1 Corinthians Chapter 12 is titled *Spiritual Gifts – Unity and Variety*. Our pericope is introduced by verse 3: “Therefore I tell you that nobody speaking by the spirit of God says, ‘Jesus is accursed.’ And no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.” St. Paul then follows up our selected passage with the beautiful image titled *One Body, Many Parts*. “As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.” (1 Co 12:12). Later Paul further clarifies this image: “Now you are Christ’s body, and individual parts of it.” (1 Co 12:27). Our passage should be interpreted within this context.

Paul is addressing divisions in the church at Corinth. He has just addressed in the previous chapter, abuses relative to celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper should be the celebration of unity and not a cause for division. Now Paul is addressing dissension caused by an ego-centric competitiveness among members of the Church. Paul advises that since all the gifts of the Spirit have a common origin, they should serve a common purpose.¹

Psalm 96:1-2, 2-3, 7-8, 9-10

Psalm 96 consists of 13 verses and is titled *God of the Universe*. This psalm is traditionally considered one of the enthronement psalms. It has a strong monotheistic message which supports our other readings for our liturgy this weekend. Our maker wants to be in an exclusive personal espousal relationship with His creation. There is only One God who is king of the universe.

The second theme is a call to mission. “Tell God’s glory among the nations, among the peoples, God’s marvelous deeds.” (Ps 96:3). All of creation must sing out a new song to the Lord to proclaim His power and grandeur.

A third theme is a call to worship. “Bring gifts and enter His courts; bow down to the Lord, splendid in holiness.” (Ps 96:8-9).

1. Brown, Fitzmyer, Murphy; The New Jerome Biblical Commentary; P.H.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; page 810.

Exegesis (Continued)

John 2:1-11

Following the days that are mentioned in John's Gospel, four days have passed from verses 1:19-51. Now we are told that it is the third day. If my math is correct, it is both the third day and the seventh day. After four days of preparation, it was on the third day that God appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai, the Great Theophany. "On the morning of the third day there were pearls of thunder and lightning, and a heavy cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled... When the Lord came down to the top of Mount Sinai, He summoned Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up to Him." (Ex 19:16-19).

The seventh day is the day that God rested. It is symbolic of the fulfillment of God's creation. The wedding banquet with fine food and choice wines supports the image of the messianic era and messianic fullness.² "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines." (Is 25:6).

The miracle at Cana is the first of seven signs in the Gospel of John. The signs or miracles are as follows: the miracle at Cana, the healing of the official's son, the healing of the paralytic, the multiplication of the loaves, the curing of the blind man, the raising of Lazarus, and the Resurrection of Jesus.

My hour has not come. The *hour*; the purpose for which Jesus came into our world, was His Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension. It is His passage from this world to the next. It is the full revelation of His glory. The hour is mentioned throughout the Gospel, e.g., 2:4; 4:21, 23; 5:25, 28; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1; and 19:27. As Jesus faced His Passion "He raised His eyes to heaven and said, 'Father the hour has come.'" (Jn 17:1). Jesus would later address His mother as *woman* for the second time. This time from the Cross. "When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved, he said to His mother, 'Woman, behold, your son.' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother.' From that **hour** the disciple took her into his home." (Jn 19:26-27).

Do whatever He tells you. These are the final recorded words of Mary in the Gospels. These words again draw us back to the Great Theophany of Exodus. "So, Moses went and summoned the elders of the people. When he set before them all that the Lord had ordered him to tell them, the people answered together, 'Everything the Lord has said, we will do.'" (Ex 19: 7-8).

Six stone jars. The stone jars that were also used for ritual purification held approximately 24 gallons of water. The jars themselves were extremely heavy. One can only imagine the weight when filled with water or wine. It would seem to be a rather long and arduous task to carry these heavy stone jars to the town well and fill them bucket by bucket with water. Jesus, the Son of God, the Word made flesh, the one through whom all of creation came into being, could have simply said, "Let there be wine," and there would have been wine. It is obviously significant that He ordered the servants to fill the jars with water. Firstly, I believe that it is symbolic of the messianic mission of Jesus to transform creation, to transform a fallen world. And therefore, water is transformed into wine. Water is an ancient symbol of human life and wine a symbol of divine life, e.g., nectar of the Gods. Secondly, the fact that the human servants were given this difficult task, would remind us of our role in the plan of salvation. The servants in the vineyard were given a wine press to transform water, (from grapes) into wine. We are a part of God's plan and so we are to "do whatever He tells you." If we do, Jesus will transform our efforts for His purposes, our eternal life, the Messianic Banquet.

2. Moloney, Harrington; Sacra Pagina Series, The Gospel of John; L.P.; Collegeville, MN; page 66.

Reflection

This weekend we move from the Baptism of the Lord to the miracle of the Wedding Feast of Cana. One of the many spiritual awakenings that I have recently experienced came from meditating on this Gospel. Sometimes we look at something a certain way, it becomes familiar, and we don't think beyond the familiarity. One day it just struck me that Jesus being God, the Eternal Word made flesh, the One who spoke, and everything came into being from nothing, could have just said, "Let there be wine and there would have been wine?" So why did He tell the waiters to fill the water jars with water? It seems like an unnecessary step for the Son of God.

Water was changed into wine for a reason. Water is an ancient symbol of human life and wine is an ancient symbol of divine life. During the Mass when the water is mixed with the wine on the altar the priest or the deacon pray these words, "By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity." Because Jesus walked into the Jordan River in solidarity with us the heavens were opened and Baptism becomes a door into the spiritual realm, an opening into divine life.

Salvation is an inside job. The jars of water were used for the Jewish ceremonial washings. The water was used to cleanse the outside of the body. Wine is taken internally and transforms from the inside. Water becomes an integral part of the wine, and the wine becomes a part of the water, the human being. You might say that it is an indwelling presence that nourishes and transforms from within. As He sat around the table the evening that we call the Last Supper, Jesus promised the indwelling presence of His life. Then He gave the apostles bread that became His body to eat and wine that became His Blood to drink. In the words of Justin Martyr, "Just as Jesus Christ our savior was made flesh and blood for our salvation through the Word of God and took on flesh and blood for our salvation, so the bread and wine become the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus, in order to transform our flesh and blood." (Apol. p66).

In our beautiful first reading from the Book of Isaiah, God promises to espouse us. Our builder seeks to marry us, to be in this deep personal relationship where two can become one. Jesus is the marriage of God and humanity. He is both human and divine. Because He walked into the Jordan River that day, because He turned water into wine, because He turned bread and wine into His body and blood, because He lived our life and died our death, oneness with God is now possible. Remember that as you approach the Altar this weekend and every time that you come to Communion to receive the gift of divine life. As you do, recall the words of Jesus, "If you eat My Body and drink My Blood you will live forever!" Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love.

Yours in Christ,



Personal Witness

I have been truly blessed to be surrounded by people of great faith throughout my life especially in my immediate and extended family. Perhaps the persons that had the greatest influence on my faith growing up were my paternal grandparents who were particularly devout Catholics. After their passing, my Aunt Marie, their oldest daughter took over as a spiritual mentor and prayer warrior for me into my seminary years and my priesthood. She passed away several years ago at the age of 93. She was a retired high school teacher who remained single throughout her life and cared for her aging parents in their final years. She attended daily Mass, led the morning rosary and was very active in her local parish, the parish that we all grew up in. She was a most saintly person with an amazing prayer life.

One day after dinner she wanted to talk to me about struggling with her prayers. As a teacher Aunt Marie was a strong type “A” person, some would say a little bossy at times. As she described her prayer experience some of that personality was recognizable. Over the years she had accumulated quite a menagerie of prayers that she prayed (read) daily. She had an old Catholic prayer book that was tattered with wear. The pages were stuffed full of additional prayers and devotions that she had added over the years. Her list of intentions had also continued to grow over the years. I was happy to discover that I was on her list near the top.

She began to confide in me her concerns and her recent struggles with her prayers. She told me that she found herself more and more distracted as she tried to pray. She said that thoughts kept coming into her mind as she was reciting her prayers. Her prayers were beautiful prayers, words that were formulated by some of the most holy men and women, saints of our Catholic Tradition. They were full of contrition and petition, honor and glory and praise. For almost two hours every day she was bombarding the heavens with her words and the words of the saints.

I listened attentively as she described her prayer experience for over an hour. Then she looked at me for my response. I responded, “Could it be that God is trying to talk to you?” My next question was, “How would you feel if you were in a relationship where only one person did all of the talking?” I asked her to describe some of the “distractions” that she had recently experienced during prayer. Some, I will admit, were not of God, but many I believe were of God. I then challenged her to spend more quiet time with the Lord, to learn to listen with her heart. This changed the quality and depth of her prayer experience exponentially.

Listening in prayer is a blessing that I learned the hard way early in my priesthood. Like my dear Aunt, I am a strong type “A” person. As a newly ordained priest I was going to set the world on fire for the Lord in my first weeks in the parish. Many, perhaps most, of my plans and initiatives fizzled. Failure brought me to my knees and opened my heart to listen to the Lord. Then I repeatedly heard the words of Mother Mary from our Gospel this Sunday, “Do whatever He tells you.” My priesthood changed when I realized that I was not in control, Christ is!

I also learned to spend more time in prayer listening and asking for guidance in my preaching. I always approached the Lord with this question, “Lord what do you want your beloved children to hear?” And I would pray, “Lord, let it be Your words and not mine.” Preaching suddenly became almost effortless as I surrendered to the Lord. For that I am eternally grateful!

