

## Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

January 20, 2013

January is an icebox month. Gray skies and bitter winds don't lift our spirits. Our mailboxes no longer bulge with cheery Christmas cards. January's mail provides the dreaded Visa bill and our 1040 forms. There's not even a Seahawks' Super Bowl this January to warm our innards. We know that the name of our church is Christ Our Hope, but it's hard to hope in January.

I looked about this week for some reason to celebrate, and I think I found it in an anniversary that we celebrate this month. Fifty years ago, on January 25, Pope John XXIII shocked the church when he announced that he would convoke an ecumenical council, Vatican II, in 1963. Good Pope John said that the idea of a council came as a surprise, even to him. But he knew that the church needed major changes; he was also aware that at seventy-seven years of age, he had been elected as an interim pope and, therefore, he couldn't do very much by himself.

It was under these circumstances that the plan for calling a council occurred to him. The bishops of the world would help him, by deciding better than he could alone what was needed to bring a new spirit into the church. Like St. Paul, whose letter to the Corinthians we just heard, John believed in the power of the Holy Spirit to rekindle new life through all the gifts and ministries in the church.

We heard this morning from another John telling us another story to thaw our January hearts and give us hope. John, more than any other of the evangelists, was a poet. And so his story of Cana is filled with poetic meaning. Miracles for John were not just miracles, but signs of something deeper. John records seven such signs in the first half of his gospel. Today's changing of the water into wine was the first sign that God's power is truly at work in Jesus.

We don't know who the couple was whose wedding Jesus celebrated. Maybe that's because it wasn't just their wedding, but the new marriage between God

and the people of God. Another poet, Isaiah, had dreamed about the day when “as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so shall your God rejoice in you.” For John, Jesus is not just a guest at the wedding, he is the bridegroom who has come to make a loving and lasting commitment with God’s people. And so we see that the more we delve into the deeper meanings of the story of Cana, the more we learn who Jesus is and what God invites us to do. The story of Cana is all about newness: new wine, new grace, new beginnings.

The story of Cana is like the story of John XXIII. New life comes at a time when spirits are drooping, when folks are embarrassed, old, alone, trapped, when the wine has run out. Listen to the voices of people who are trapped: “Ah, why should I vote? It’s just more of the same.” “After all these years, I’m not going to change. I guess I was born this way.” An old man sighs, “It doesn’t matter anymore; my life is almost over.” A young girl complains, “The same old thing; this Mass is boring.” The layperson laments, “Rome isn’t going to change. I might as well leave the church.” The husband or wife admits, “I guess we’re just stuck in a rut.”

Tomorrow we celebrate another hopeful January anniversary: the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King never moaned about the fact that the wine of freedom was drying up in America. He believed deeply in the power of God’s grace not only to change water into wine, but to change hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. His dream of making a great nation even greater and more just stirred us to begin to change.

It’s been estimated that the new wine at Cana added up to one hundred and eighty gallons. Once again, the poet John was pointing to a deeper reality: the grace of Christ is inexhaustible. There is still time for all of us as individuals, as a church, as a nation, to change and believe in the new wine that Jesus still pours out for us. We follow a Lord who changes things: water into wine, bread into his body, old ways into new life, January into hope.

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