

Sunday Readings

the Year of Luke



*Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee,
and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.*
(Luke 2:11)

2nd Sunday Ordinary Time
Sunday 20th January 2019

notes

1. The biblical excerpts are drawn from the New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), published by Oxford University Press (1994).

2. **Cover image:** 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C – image from Missionaries of Sacred Heart, Peru.

3. **Lectio Divina:** reading GOD's WORD in a moment of prayer and allowing it to enlighten and renew us:

"In the presence of GOD, during a recollected reading of the text, it is good to ask, for example: 'LORD, what does this text say to me? What is it about my life that you want to change by this text? What troubles me about this text? Why am I not interested in this?' Or perhaps: 'What do I find pleasant in this text? What is it about this Word that moves me? What attracts me? Why does it attract me?'"¹

The practise of *lectio divina* requires a quiet space, a passage of scripture and the willingness to give time to the project. The passage used should be short. For the purpose of this booklet, we suggest using the gospel reading of the up-coming Sunday.

There are four steps in the traditional practise of *lectio divina*. The steps don't have to have the following order:

lectio (reading) – read the passage of Scripture read slowly - more than once. If a particular word, phrase, or sentence seems significant (even if you don't know why) you may want to write it down.

meditatio (reflection) – let the significant words fill your mind without straining to analyse them. We are in GOD's presence and so let the Holy Spirit lead your understanding of the words.

oratio (prayer) – allow your heart to speak to GOD, in words inspired by the passage of Scripture, or by the thoughts that have come to you, while reflecting on it.

contemplatio (rest) – let go of ideas and words and allow yourself to rest in the presence of GOD, in simple and wordless contemplation.

This booklet gives the context and some commentary on each of the readings and the psalm used in the Sunday's liturgy. Familiarity with the texts and the commentary beforehand, can better prepare our hearing and understanding the passages in our worship. Whatever our preparation for doing this exercise and whatever questions we may use to break open the passage, we must be conscious of Christ's promise: *'Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them'*.²

4. **Review of the Week** – at the end of each reflection the review examines one of the themes of the readings, usually drawn from the gospel, and provides an opportunity to check our own performance, in the light of the Word and Eucharist that we have previously heard and experienced.

1 From paragraph 153 The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium) – Pope Francis (2013)

2 Mt.18:20

2nd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

20th January 2019

the good wine

Introduction

Between *Epiphany (manifestation)* and Lent, we follow the mystery of GOD's revelation to GOD's people in Jesus. The context of today's texts is highly symbolic. A new GOD appears to us in the middle of a wedding celebration. Just as Mary's request to her Son pushed Jesus somewhat prematurely into revealing the plan of GOD, so the readings prompt us to action too, even if we feel we are not ready to act in new ways at our work or in our relationships.

first reading: Isaiah 62: 1 - 5

[The vindication and salvation of Zion]

*For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until her vindication shines out like the dawn,
and her salvation like a burning torch.(1)
The nations shall see your vindication,
and all the kings your glory;
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.(2)
You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your GOD.(3)
You shall no more be termed Forsaken,
and your land shall no more be termed Desolate;
but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married;
for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married.(4)
For as a young man marries a young woman,
so shall your builder marry you,
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
so shall your GOD rejoice over you.(5)*

In the past the prophets pointed towards a new future. Land was never a natural possession. It was always based on promise – so when exiles return to the land, it will be like a wedding feast. This is GOD's delight; that people find again their true place. *Chapters 56-66 in Isaiah*, celebrate the Israelite return from exile. The movement in the speech is from the experience of vulnerability (in exile), to a restored social imagination. The restoration is still not complete. Oppressing still occurs. It's done now by those with whom the returnees shared exile. But the speaker imagines a new future, where the LORD will rejoice over a fully-restored community in Jerusalem, as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride.

The poetry shows a community, whose dreams rush out beyond their present reality. The speaker projects the dream of a future different and better than their present circumstances. The people know that their present way life need not be the way it is. The prophet voices the dream of how their world might be. The life-giving conversation between the LORD and the Israelite people has re-started. In this kind of conversation; slaveries are overcome, exile are ended; and the powers for death defeated. The voice boldly speaks the WORD of the LORD's rescue and transformative action. The words of the speaker stretch beyond the timid yearnings of the congregation, towards real newness.

response: *Psalm 96(95) : 7 – 9, 14*³ [praise to the LORD who comes in judgement]

*The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;
the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple;(7)
the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eyes;(8)
the fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever;
the ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.(9) . . .
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.(14)*

In a climate of oppression and coercion, even if there are no riots or public disruption, there is no real order. The Psalmist finds in *GOD's Torah*, the *Shalom* or *peace* that human management cannot deliver. In an atmosphere of slavery, oppression and coercion public life is closely and carefully supervised chaos. In contrast to the contained chaos of the Pharaoh, is the order of *shalom*, *the justice of the LORD*.

The speaker discerns that true order is a delicate balancing of GOD's gift of creation. The gifts of creation are not negotiable, or at human disposal. The principles of *justice* and *mercy* found in *the Torah*, cannot be compromised. The power of a ruler is sometimes presented as a grant from the people. Sometimes it is presented as a grant from the LORD. That power can be held arrogantly, or it can be exercised for the benefit of the people. *Shalom* is the establishment of order – but a very special order. It's not the order as when all existence is given and ordained by, 'the gods'. It is not order as technical mastery, in which everything is managed by human-kind and is at human disposal. It is order in the hassles of covenant obedience.

³ *Ps.96* – the heavenly elements of the world, reveal the power and wisdom of their creator (cf. vv.2-7). The creator's wisdom is available to humans in *the Law* (vv.8-11), toward which the psalmist prays to be open (vv.12-14). The themes of light and speech unify the psalm.

second reading: 1 Corinthians 12 : 4 - 11

[Spiritual gifts]

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;(4)
 and there are varieties of services, but the same LORD;(5)
 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same GOD
 who activates all of them in everyone.(6)
 To each is given the manifestation
 of the Spirit for the common good.(7)
 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom,
 and to another the utterance of knowledge
 according to the same Spirit,(8)
 to another faith by the same Spirit,
 to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,(9)
 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy,
 to another the discernment of spirits,
 to another various kinds of tongues,
 to another the interpretation of tongues.(10)
 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit,
 who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.(11)*

Ecstatic and charismatic activity were common in early Christian experience, as they were in other ancient religions. But the Corinthians seem to have developed a disproportionate esteem for certain phenomena, especially tongues, to the detriment of order in the liturgy. Paul's response to this development provides us with the fullest exposition we have of his theology of the charisms.

Paul's intention is to argue against *Gnostic* influence among the Corinthians. Such influence, led factions in that community to over-emphasise the importance of some of the '*charismata*', especially; speaking in tongues. There are some features common to all charisms despite their diversity. All are *gifts*, or *grace*, from outside one's self. All are forms of *service* (*diakonia*) as an expression of their purpose and effect. All are *workings* (*energemata*) in which GOD is active. Paul associates each of these aspects with what later theology will call one of the persons of the Trinity.⁴

Paul's use of the word '*service*' or ***diakonia*** (v.5) strikes a further polemical note. The Corinthians thought the charismatic gifts existed for their own glory and benefit, rather than for serving the community. The particular gifts or manifestations of the Spirit are to be used for the common good (v.7). That sums up the sense of the earlier verses in the chapter (vv.4-6) and serves to introduce the rest of the passage (vv.8-10) where '*the charismata*' are listed as: wisdom,

4 [v.11] – an early example of "*appropriation*" (Cf. also vv.4-6).

knowledge, faith, healing, miracle-working, prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues and interpretation of tongues.

The gnostic-leaning Corinthians laid claim to wisdom that they criticised Paul for lacking. *'Faith'* (v.9) does not mean the faith by which all Christians respond to the gospel and so are justified; but it is a special gift confined to some. It is connected with miracle-working. Prophecy does not require interpretation, for it is intelligible speech; but it requires the discerning of spirits to see whether it is genuine or false prophecy. In *verse 1*, Paul sets up the criterion for prophesy – does it confess, "*Jesus is LORD*" or does it, "*curse Jesus*"?

gospel reading: John 2 : 1 - 11

[The wedding at Cana]

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.(1) Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.(2) When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."(3) And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come."(4) His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."(5) Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.(6) Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim.(7) He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it.(8) When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom(9) and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now."(10) Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.(11)

Jesus went with his mother and his disciples to a small-town wedding, which leads to him acting publicly for the first time. Jesus' words, "*Woman, what do you want from me?*" (v.4) are strong ones. In other parts of the Scriptures they appear in lawsuits, or when someone is being injured by someone else. It is something like our modern expression, "*stop hassling me.*" His *'hour'* which had not yet come, was the hour of his death. Mary presses Jesus to act to fulfill his mission. In the account of John, immediately after this incident at Cana, Jesus is reported as driving the money-changers out of the temple, and talking about his death. The gospel writers push Jesus into public life, and the larger struggle in much the same way as his mother is reported as pressing him to correct a social miscalculation at a wedding feast (v.5).

In the Scriptures *the Messianic era* had often been described as *an age of a great abundance of wine*. The prophet *Amos* had said that when the Messiah came there would be a great harvest of wheat and grapes – and that the hills would distill wine. *Isaiah* says that the LORD was going to prepare a banquet for all the peoples, with very good meat and very good wines. And *Isaiah* has also prophesied about the Messiah saying that, "*He would not be sad*". By presenting this action of Jesus, the author is making it clear that Jesus is the promised Messiah. It had often been prophesied that the Messianic era would be like a wedding with GOD (as in the first reading today). The *Song of Songs* is a book that speaks of that wedding.⁵

Attention is drawn to stone jars of the rites of purification (v.6). A contrast is inevitable between the poor wine of Israelite religion, which preceded the appearance of the Messiah. Jesus clarified that with his arrival, the promised wedding was now on. John the Baptist, when he called Jesus the Messiah he called him "*the Bridegroom*". Jesus himself said that his disciples didn't fast because he was the bridegroom. In several parables he spoke of, *the reigning of GOD as a marriage*, or as a wedding feast and of himself as the bridegroom.

The first '*sign*' in John's gospel account was a sign of the joy – of sister and brotherhood. It is the foretaste of the perfect society GOD prepares for humankind – it's a party.⁶ A real rip-snorter party, with lashings of good wine. But the best wine of that party will be the last, that is, eternal life.

items for sharing:

- *The prophets point to a new future. Land was never a natural possession. It was always based on promise so when exiles return to the land it will be like a wedding feast. This is GOD's delight – people find again their true place. Comment on **Isaiah 62 : 1 – 5***
- *Around the Messiah, the true power for life-giving and renewal, the Christian community is diverse, with no disciple superior to another. Each contributes to the fullness of the community's life. Comment on **1 Corinthians 12 : 1 – 11***
- *The gospel account promises that the rich brew dispensed at Cana is available for all would-be disciples of Jesus (those who do what he commands). Jesus is THE One who shows the Way of GOD. Comment on **John 2 : 1 – 11***

5 Cf. *The Song of Songs* – There, the wife asks her husband to kiss her and says that his caresses are better than wine.

6 *The first of the signs - 'Sign' (semeion) is John's symbolic term for Jesus' wondrous deeds.*

prayer:

*GOD of wonders,
at Cana in Galilee
you revealed your glory
in Jesus Christ
and summoned all humanity
to life in him.*

*Show to your people
gathered on this day
your transforming power
and give us a foretaste
of the wine you keep
for the age to come.*

*We make our prayer through
our LORD Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
GOD for ever and ever. Amen*

review of the week:

Isaiah uses marriage symbolism to speak of the tenderness, the intimacy and the affection of GOD's new relationship with us. GOD is the bridegroom and friend who can love with tenderness and passion; who can delight in the love of people like us. The gospel takes up this theme and presents not only Jesus' first miracle, but also, the first of his '*signs*' which are the central theme of *John the evangelist*. The GOD of Jesus is revealed at a wedding in the company of friends. GOD is preparing a people for celebration - a new alliance. What is presented as symbolic, will be the full reality, when '*the hour*' comes (*Jn.2:4*).

Our religion will be joyful and festive because we share in GOD's joy. "*As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your GOD rejoice over you*" (cf *Is.62:5*). Through GOD's holy Spirit, we have entered into GOD's family, by becoming GOD's people. GOD is building the community in unity and diversity, because, "*to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good*" (cf *1 Co.12:7*). Like the GOD in whom it believes, our community will not rest, "*until our vindication shines out like the dawn!*" (*Is.62:1*).

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