

# Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Year C



**FIRST READING**  
Isaiah 62:1-5

**PSALM**  
Psalm 96:1-3, 7-10

**SECOND READING**  
1 Corinthians 12:4-11

**GOSPEL**  
John 2:1-11

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### PRAYER

#### Psalm 96:1-3, 7-10

O sing to the LORD a new song;  
sing to the LORD, all the earth.  
Sing to the LORD, bless his name;  
tell of his salvation from day to day.  
Declare his glory among the nations,  
his marvelous works  
among all the peoples.  
Ascribe to the LORD,  
O families of the peoples,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.  
Ascribe to the LORD  
the glory due his name;  
bring an offering,  
and come into his courts.  
Worship the LORD in holy splendor;  
tremble before him, all the earth.  
Say among the nations,  
“The LORD is king!  
The world is firmly established;  
it shall never be moved.  
He will judge the peoples with equity.”

### READING THE WORD

#### First Reading Isaiah 62:1-5

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.  
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.  
You shall be a crown of beauty

in the hand of the Lord,  
and a royal diadem  
in the hand of your God.  
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.  
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.

#### Second Reading 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance 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 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. All these are activated by one and the same

Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

#### Gospel John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. 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 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.” Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

## HEARING THE WORD

### “The Divine Marriage”

Today’s liturgy moves us fully into Ordinary Time. The liturgy of this season leads us through the “ordinary” moments of Jesus’ ministry – his teaching and miracles – following the Gospel narrative. However, beyond these events, there lies a much deeper and profound reality of God’s design to make the people his own. Today’s readings describe this design through a marriage metaphor.

The first reading comes from the third part of the book of Isaiah. It was after 539 B.C., when the Israelites were finally allowed to return from the Babylonian exile. This was the moment awaited by them for more than seventy years. Still, many chose to remain in Babylon, where they had made a decent life for themselves. Those who did return found themselves in a very difficult situation. They returned to heaps of ruins and fields of ashes, to an empty and desolate land. All hopes for a speedy restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple to their former glory were quickly shattered. Discouragement, disappointment and doubt quickly crept in. Would God deliver on his promises of a glorious restoration proclaimed by the earlier prophets? Isaiah’s voice rises over those dark days and over the ruins of the once-glorious city. With unwavering confidence, he declares the coming vindication and restoration of

the city and the Temple to such magnificence, that all the nations and kings will admire its glory.

But the prophet speaks of much more than just a physical rebuilding of walls and structures. He speaks of God giving the city, which here symbolizes the people, “a new name”, which will come from “the mouth of the Lord”. In biblical terms, a change of name means a change of status, identity and life mission. The prophet means that those who returned from the exile, despite their current predicament, will be fundamentally transformed. Thus, their state of being “forsaken” and “desolate” will be changed to “my delight is in her” and “married”. God plans to overturn the state of desolation and abandonment, and to transform it into a joyful union between himself and the nation. The prophet applies the image of marriage to this reality. In the Scripture, marriage often symbolically describes the bond of love and commitment between God and his people, as is evident in the book of the prophet Hosea. This “marriage” between the Lord and Israel will create an unbreakable union in which God himself will delight.

The second reading contains an opening section of Paul’s long explanation on the nature and use of various charismatic gifts in the Corinthian community. Corinthians were very prone to divisiveness and competition. They liked to make distinctions between

themselves, and competed for higher status in the community on the basis of the gifts they possessed. Among others Paul names these gifts: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discernment, speaking in tongues and the interpretation of tongues. This list shows just how gifted and diverse the Corinthian community was. However, the Corinthians often used these gifts inappropriately for self-promotion, arguing which of them was the most important one. Paul begins to deal with the problem by laying down two fundamental principles. First, all gifts come from the one and the same God, through the one and the same Spirit. Second, all these gifts serve a single purpose – community building. Even though each person might have a different gift, their work and ministry is an expression of the same Spirit working through them and for the same purpose. Paul implies that the divisions and arguments about the priority of gifts are ultimately foolish, and a sign of spiritual immaturity. But there is another essential principle lying behind Paul’s words. The presence and working of the Spirit among the Corinthians constitute a decisive proof that they have become God’s children through what Paul calls “adoption”. We find this stated explicitly in another one of his letters, where he says, “you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Rom 8:15). Thus, despite their shortcomings, the be-

lievers share in the divine life of the Father through the Holy Spirit. They are God's adopted children. They are God's family.

The Gospel reading narrates a well-known episode of Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding feast in Cana. John calls this "a sign". Signs point beyond themselves, they are meant to inform and instruct. Therefore, turning of water into wine was much more than just an act of Jesus' kindness for the newlyweds.

This sign was given in the context of a wedding, which suggests that its meaning will be marriage-related. Since, as we saw in the first reading, marriage often has a symbolic meaning in the Scripture, the story of Cana is about a new bond which Jesus will establish between God and the people. Two points make this clear.

First, Jesus transforms water into wine using large jars which were originally used for the Jewish purifications. Purification was a Jewish religious rite that involved ritual washing with water, meant to remove impurity of a spiritual and religious kind. Only a pure person could approach the Holy God. By using these ritual objects but transforming the water they contained into wine, Jesus indicated that the old rites of purification would no longer be needed. Similarly, the steward who tasted the new wine called it better than the older one. All this means that, through Jesus, humanity will find a new and better way to enter a right relationship with

God. Jesus will make the espousal of the people by God possible.

Second, this sign leads the disciples to believe in Jesus because they correctly interpreted what they saw. In the Old Testament, the provision of abundant and flowing wine at a great heavenly feast symbolized the restoration of the nation and its reunification to God. It was a sign of the Messianic times of eternal joy and a symbol of renewed creation (cf. Isaiah 25:6; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13-14). The disciples understood that this abundance of wine created by Jesus at a wedding feast was a sign that he came from God as the Messiah who will create a new union between God and his people. A union that will last into eternity.

The symbolism of marriage dominates the readings from Isaiah and from the Gospel. The prophet anticipates that God will remake his bond with the people through "marrying" them and delighting in them. Although not using the language of marriage, Paul thinks that the Corinthians became a part of God's family, his children, as demonstrated by various gifts of the Spirit working in them. In the context of an ordinary wedding, Jesus reveals himself as God's Messiah, right at the start of his ministry. One of the chief purposes of his earthly mission will be bringing the people to the Father through himself. John the Baptist described Jesus as "the bridegroom" (John 3:29), which makes the union between God and

the believers created by him and God a marriage of unbreakable character. Those who experience this new relationship and this union with God through Jesus, would truly be capable of responding to the Psalmist's call to, "declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples".

## **LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD**

We enter into the ordinary time of the Liturgical Year inspired and motivated by the image of marriage as a symbol of our relationship to God. We can understand the depth and importance of this symbol even better when we consider marriage from the traditional African point of view.

In the modern world, and also in Africa today, marriage has become primarily a union between two individuals, understood as an expression and outcome of their mutual love. However, in African traditional society marriage was seen as a union between entire extended families and even clans. Marriage was intended to create life-giving bonds between families. Various stages of the marriage process included mutual visits, dining together, negotiations, exchange of gifts and bride-price. This complexity reflected the awareness of a developing relationship and of mutual care and responsibility for the well-being of the two families. Such family-based unions tended to be much more stable and enduring than the ones made be-

tween two individuals alone. This can teach us much about our life with God and within our Christian communities.

First, we must recognize, that our relationship with God, no matter how private, must include others, it must be community based. The God of Israel committed himself to the nation, “marrying” it as a people. The people then responded to God by living a life according to his law as a nation. Today, many wise people recognize that we are under a threat of individualism and its negative impact. Individualism has undermined not only marriage itself, but also the very nature of the Christian community. Being a Christian today is often reduced to going to Church on Sunday and fulfilling some laws and rituals which should make us right with God as separated individuals. This was never the case in the Early Church. As we saw in the second reading, Paul understood the Church as a community of individuals sharing their gifts in service to one another. Furthermore, the members were not to use these gifts to promote themselves, but to build up one another. The same happens in marriage, where individuals and families come together to build up and bring forth new life. Thus, when we “marry” our God by entering into a relationship with him through Jesus, we also “marry” his people. This means that we must be a contributing community member in some way, unique to each one of us. Otherwise, our relationship to God is incomplete.

Furthermore, Jesus in today’s Gospel gives us a wonderful instruction on how to build relationships based on the marriage model. In Cana, he did not have to change that water into wine. But, when he did, he made sure that the people understood that he comes from God with the mission of bringing them to God. Time and again we find ourselves in similar situations. When we see ourselves surrounded by strangers, we think that nothing is required of us. We have no sense of duty or responsibility towards strangers. But, when, as Christians, we begin to see ourselves as a part of God’s family, this changes entirely. Just as in a marriage relationship, we feel the need to do acts of unmerited and unrequested kindness or favor towards those who are members of our family. This, in turn, will lead others to recognize God acting through us. Seeing ourselves as a part of the Christian family and those whom God has espoused will bring us out of isolation and make us true members of God’s family.

## PROVERB

*“Even  
the tiniest crumb  
finds itself  
married to bread.”*

## ACTION

### Self-examination:

Does my relationship to God affect how I see and act towards others? How? Am I a contributing member of my Church community? In what way?

### Response to God:

During this week I will think and pray to God as my intimate friend or even a spouse. How could I better respond to him within this kind of relationship?

### Response to your World:

I will identify a one single gift which God has given me and apply in the service of someone or my community. In our group, we share our experiences of relationships, whether marriage, friendship, or just of being a close acquaintance of someone. What can these relationships teach us about our relationship to God? How can we relate to God as our spouse?

## PRAYER

*Lord God,  
you have chosen  
to bind yourself to us.  
You have chosen us  
for your people  
and have been our Father  
and our spouse.  
We thank you!  
Take away  
our isolation and self-focus  
so that  
we may respond to you  
and our brothers and sisters  
with loving  
and constant commitment.  
Amen.*