

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time C/2010

Life is made up of relationships. To talk about relationship is to talk about connection, communion and unity. Connection, communion and unity build up our life, because the balance and the enjoyment of our life depend on our relationships. This is true not only for life in society, but also for our spiritual life as well. All the readings of this Sunday invite us to meditate on that which builds us as a community of believers in our relationship to one another and to God who is the source of our joy.

The first reading of the book of Isaiah focuses on the situation of Israel in the aftermath of exile. In fact, it was a shared conviction in Jewish society that the sin of the people has destroyed the relationship with God. In that sense, they have interpreted the exile as a consequence of their sins. However, instead of abandoning them for ever, God will show them his mercy and forgive their sins.

In such a context, one of the roles of the prophet was to encourage the people to hope in the Lord and wait for his consolation. That is what Isaiah does as he reassures his fellow citizens in a metaphoric language of human love that God will reconcile them. They will no more be called “forsaken” or their land “desolate”. Instead they will be given a new name and be called “my delight”, for their land will be espoused by the Lord. Since God will find his joy in them, they will be a glorious crown and a royal diadem in the hand of the Lord.

The point behind this encouragement by Isaiah was to help his fellow citizens to realize how God is ever gracious by willing to reestablish the relationship with them in spite of their sins. At the same time, this initiative of God challenges us also to build up strong relationships among us. But, how can we build strong relationships among us without recognizing and respecting the charisms of one another? How can we maintain good relationships with one another if we do not live in unity?

As St Paul says, the Church is the body of Christ. One of the characteristics of a healthy body is that every part in it performs its own function for the good of the whole. In that sense, each member of the Church has received spiritual gifts and charisms for the benefit of many. Although gifts and charisms are different, it is the same Lord who, in his love, bestows them upon his children. To some, God has given wisdom, knowledge or faith. To others, God has given the gifts of healing, great deeds, prophecy, discernment or speaking in tongues.

To acknowledge these different gifts is to accept that we are fundamentally different in our nature and in our function. However, the differences between us should never be an obstacle that prevents us from working together. Rather, they should allow us to complete each other and to enrich each other. For instance, an electrician is as important to a priest as a policeman is important to a farmer. A carpenter is as important to a plumber as an engineer is important to a teacher, and vice versa. None is meaningless; and none is more important than the other.

As understood, we need each other and should support each other. In spite of our differences and the variety of our gifts, we are just one people, the people of God; we form a unity. Unity, in turn, does not mean uniformity, but recognition of those different spiritual gifts, their respect and their being placed at the service of our fellows.

That is what Jesus has done by using his special gift for the benefice of those invited to the wedding feast in Cana. We know that the feast was about to turn into chaos for lack of wine. Wine meant a lot in Jewish society. The failure of provisions would have been a big deal, because hospitality in the Middle East was a sacred duty. But for the provisions to fail at a wedding feast would be a terrible humiliation for the bride and the groom. That is why Mary intervened so that Jesus may do something for them.

Three things are important to highlight in this first miracle of Jesus. First of all, we have the place where it took place. The Gospel says it was in a home, at a wedding. A wedding, a home: these are an expression of ordinary circumstances of life. Jesus comes to us in ordinary circumstances of life that he wants to transform for us into moments of joy and happiness. There is a strange paradox in the attitude some people have about the place they call home. Outside their home, they are hilarious, gentle and kind. But in their own home, they are more aggressive, more selfish and more discourteous than they would dare be in society with strangers. To be at our best with strangers and at our worst with our family is a big mistake. Remember always that it was in a home that Jesus manifested forth his glory.

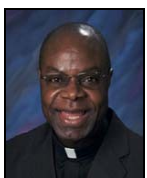
Second, we have the reason why the miracle took place. As we noticed, it was in order to save a couple from humiliation that Jesus turned water into wine. If that is the case, Jesus is challenging us to always look for the happiness of our fellows. That is why; it is malicious and even cynical to enjoy the misfortune of others and to make a good story of them an idle gossip. Remember always what Jesus has done for this couple and follow his example.

Third, we have the person at the origin of the miracle. The miracle took place at the request of Mary. In fact, Mary turned to Jesus when things went wrong. She knew that even if Jesus' time had not yet come, he would do something. Mary had the faith which could trust even when she did not know in detail what he would do. She trusted Jesus enough to ask the servants to do whatever he would recommend them.

In life, there are always dark hours, where you do not know what can happen to you and to those you love. Remember your faith and trust in Jesus. Remember that Mary played a role in the life of Jesus while he was not yet known. That role is permanent in salvation history because nobody today will become the mother of Jesus. As Mary has intervened for the couple in Cana, she can do the same thing for you. In difficult times, call upon her; she is also your mother and you are the friend of Jesus.

Like Jesus who used his special gift to turn water into wine; like Mary who used her gift of motherhood to intervene for the distressed couple, let us use our gifts for the good of our brothers and sisters. Let us ask Jesus to bless us through the intercession of his Blessed mother. May God bless you all!

Isaiah 62, 1-5; 1 Corinthians 12, 4-11; John 2, 1-11



Homily Date: January 17, 2010

© 2010 – Rev. Felicien I. Mbala, PhD, STD.

Contact: www.mbala.org

Document Name: 20100117homily.pdf