

HOM 2nd Sunday 2018 C Jan 20

Before the homily I want to give you a brief report on the 46th March for Life which took place in Washington DC on Friday. For the 38th time I was able to participate, but two days before, I decided to drive instead going on the Holy Family bus which I learned was full and had a small waiting list of people wanting to get on it. I am so pleased that two of our parishioners, Anne Scekeres and her daughter Abbie, were on that bus and participated in the March. Randy & Bernie Obusek also drive and participated, along with their daughter Taylor who is a student at Catholic University.

Unfortunately the Holy Family bus had a problem with the door near Myersville, Maryland, at a rest stop, and so another bus had to be sent for the passengers, who could not then attend 10 am Mass at the National Basilica Shrine of the Immaculate Conception as planned. But they did make to the March pretty much on time and afterwards returned home safely.

I was able to make it for the Mass at the Shrine which comfortably seats 3,500 but can fit 10,000. I would guess that at least 5,000 to 7,000 marchers were present for the Mass. I among many did not have a seat. Since the Shrine parking lot was full, I had to park far away, and I arrived just in time for the entrance procession. It was standing room only with people still pouring in.

The Pro-Life Movement is Alive and well. Organizers of the March were expecting 100,000 to participate, but the crowd was huge. The only semi-official estimate I got online from one news source was between 200K and 300K people. As in past at least half of the March participants were under 25 years of age. Some of them carried signs which said "I am the pro-life generation."

Bishop Malesic was there greeting people from our Diocese, but I did not get to greet him because he was not in the same place as last year as I assumed he was going to be.

President Trump addressed the crowd by way of recorded video on the giant video screen. Vice President Pence was again there in person with his wife to address the people. Pro-abortion converts to the pro-life movement also spoke. Abbie Johnson who is a former Planned Parenthood administrator and she is now working to get others working at Planned Parenthood to leave. Since she began her ministry some 600 have resigned. Planned Parenthood performs over 300,000 abortions a year and receives \$500 million annually from taxpayers. Abbie Johnson has also produced a major movie documentary coming out this year to theaters. The title is Unplanned. I plan to see it and I hope you will too.

A retired OB-GYN doctor told her story of conversion from doing abortions to helping people to respect and protect the life of every unborn baby.

Compelling also was the talk by a Princeton University Senior, the President of Princeton University Students for Life. She is majoring in bio-chemical engineering, and she told us that

*she would have been a candidate for abortion because she has a genetic brittle bone condition which has caused her much suffering and many problems, but that she also has much joy and loves life, and is grateful that she was not aborted. She also reminded us of the themes of this year's March for Life -- **Unique from Day One; Pro-life is Pro-Science** -- because science verifies that at the moment of conception a unique human person is brought into being with all the genes needed for his or her full development.*

While walking from the National Mall where the opening rally took place to the US Supreme Court Building where the March ends I thought about stopping in to see the Speaker of the House of Representatives who is a Catholic and all the other pro-abortion Catholic representatives and senators and asking each of them three questions: 1) Why have you closed your mind to the truth? 2) Why have you hardened your heart to innocent unborn babies and to God? and 3) Are a few years of earthly power worth more than the eternal loss of your soul? In the end, I knew that I had neither the energy, nor the time, nor the poise to do this, but I hope somebody does.

I must add that I am disappointed that the bishops of all pro-abortion representatives and senators have not in concert and out of charity excommunicated them in order to win their repentance and salvation as St. Paul himself recommended in such cases. At the very least, they should be denied Holy Communion as Pope Benedict previously directed the US Bishops to do. Unfortunately, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, who was President of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops at the time, refused to convey this to them. Now we can understand why.

Finally, let me say that you would have to be there to see for yourselves the peace, the joy and the love on the faces and in the words and actions of the participants and leaders of the March for Life. It's the trademark of people who love God and respect the gift of life He has given us.

***** Homily*****

A wedding celebration at the time of Jesus was a major event even more so than today. During Jesus' time walking the earth, a typical Jewish wedding lasted five to seven days. That required lots of good food and lots of good wine. So at the Wedding at Cana referred to in today's Gospel reading, to run out of either one or both would have been an extreme embarrassment for the newlyweds and their families, even though some of the members of wedding party, we may suppose, could have gone out to buy more.

Nevertheless, when the wine ran short Mary intervened immediately with Jesus Who at first seems to shrug her off. "*Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.*"

Despite Jesus' apparent decline to help, Mary tells the servants: "*Do whatever He tells you.*" She knows her Son will help. Even now, neither Jesus nor the Father refuse May anything she asks for, because she only asks what is according to God's will – what pleases the Lord.

So Jesus turns 150 gallons of water into exceptionally fine wine. That may seem like a lot of wine, but maybe not. Maybe the wine ran short because while the supply of wine was undoubtedly based on the number of guests, there may have been a lot of heavy drinkers at this Wedding in Cana.

Still, a parishioner by the name of Ed Materkowski who is a retired civil engineer from one of the churches where I was pastor -- St. Hedwig in Smock, now closed -- thought that there must have been a good amount of wine left over. And I suspect he is right simply because there were twelve wicker baskets of fragments left over from Jesus' miraculous' multiplication of loaves and fishes, So when Jesus turned water into wine at Cana, it was probably done with similar overabundance so that all were satisfied and as a sign that He, the Lord, is bounteous in giving us blessings.

In any case, Ed decided to write a book about what happened to the left over wine from the Cana Wedding. Its title is *The Journey of the Good Wine; A Story of Giving and Forgiving*. The 77-page book is what I would call a Scripture Novelette because it is based on Gospel events such as the parable of the Good Samaritan, the story about the Woman at the Well, and the Disciples on the Road to Emmaus, but it ties them and others all together and offers a plausible rendition of what took place in their lives when they drank and passed on to others some of the good wine from the Cana Wedding. And it has a marvelous surprise ending that connects The Wedding at Cana to the Last Supper.

This well-written, little book that will make you feel good and perhaps help those who read it to do good has Bishop Malesic's Imprimatur. There are a couple of loaner copies on the table by our Campaign Thermometer in the back church. Feel free to take one home, read it, and return it. Or if you would like to acquire your own copy, let me know and I can put you in touch with the author.

Back to today's Gospel reading and the Wedding at Cana, which is really more about the Wedding of the Lamb. We have to keep in mind here that the Gospel writer John recounted this event, not only because it was Jesus' first public miracle and an epiphany event which made Him known to His disciples as God -- nor did he recount it only because it was an event which provides a window through which we can better see the role of the Blessed Mother in the life of the Church. Rather, he recounted it also because he wants to teach his readers some soteriology which is the theological study of how we are saved. And those who participate in the eternal Wedding of the Lamb are saved.

So, when Jesus says to Mary that His Hour has not yet come, He is referring to the Hour of His Death and Resurrection. And from this we can see that John understands that what takes place at the Wedding in Cana is symbolic of something more than just re-supplying wine for the guests. And he has been given to know that Mary's request of her Son is more than just her not wanting the wedding couple to be embarrassed.

Mary's request, that is, her telling Jesus "*They have no wine*", is another way of her saying: "*Son, how can God – YOU -- marry His people -- as the prophet Isaiah foretold in our first reading – YOUR BUILDER SHALL MARRY YOU -- if they do not have the grace – the new wine – of Holy Spirit as I was given?*" It was indeed because Mary was full of grace from the moment of her conception that she was able to say YES to God's marriage proposal by which she became the spouse of God and the mother of God's Son.

And it was furthermore by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit at that moment of consent that Mary received a superabundance of grace by which God's Son took flesh in her and she would become with Him the Mediatrix of all graces to His Church and through His Church to many.

So when Jesus tells Mary that His hour has not yet come, He is referring to that hour when He will pour out to His Bride, the Church, the grace – the new wine – of the Holy Spirit by which the Church will enter into nuptial oneness with Him at the Wedding of the Lamb. In fact, on the day of Pentecost, after the Apostles – with Mary present and praying for them -- had received the grace of the Holy Spirit, and were proclaiming the Gospel message to the Jews in Jerusalem at that time -- as each one heard them in his own tongue, they said to one another in reference to the apostles: "*They have had too much new wine.*" (Acts 2: 13)

The Gospel writer John was well-aware of this when he recounted the Wedding at Cana, and so, he knew that Mary's words to the servants – *Do whatever He tells you* – were also meant for the members of the Church. By acting on Jesus' words they would receive and communicate to others the new wine of the Holy Spirit so that God could be all in all the willing and the Wedding of the Lamb and His Bride could get underway and continue into the never ending joy of the Father's House.

By teaching all nations the truth of the Gospel and baptizing them, as Jesus commanded, the Holy Spirit would be freely given to unite people to Jesus' Mystical Body, empowering each one for the work entrusted to them, as St. Paul says in today's second reading.

By heeding Jesus' new commandment to LOVE ON ANOTHER AS I LOVE YOU, all the members of the Church join in Jesus self-offering to the Father's will unto the Cross for the life of the world, along with Mary. By their deliberate, free, and full consent to this in Holy Communion with Jesus, they open their hearts to receive an overflowing abundance of new wine -- to be communicated to those for whom they offer themselves – for their sanctification and salvation in oneness with Jesus.

All this is so that the Eternal Wedding celebration of heaven – the Wedding of the Lamb -- includes all the willing, each sharing in God's divine glory, praising and thanking Him forever for the fullness of life and fullness of joy that has been given.

Brothers and sisters, if you believe in the blessings of marriage and you like weddings, you won't want to miss this one – the wedding of the Lamb, that is. It's RSVP. Get your reply in now

during this Mass at Holy Communion. Just pray these words silently and sincerely and strive to live them out with Mary's help: I AM ALL YOURS O MOST LOVING JESUS THROUGH MARY YOUR MOTHER.