Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Gospel text (*Jn* 2:1-12): There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servers, “Do whatever he tells you.” (…).

Mary's prayer

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(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today, Mary makes a request of her Son on behalf of some friends in need. She entrusts a human need to his power, to a power which is more than skill and human ability.

In this dialogue with Jesus, we actually see her as a Mother who asks, one who intercedes. As we listen to this Gospel passage, it is worth going a little deeper to learn from Mary the right way to pray. Mary does not really ask something of Jesus: she simply says to him: “They have no wine” (Jn 2:3). Now the bride and groom find themselves in trouble, and Mary simply says this to Jesus. She doesn't ask for anything specific, much less that Jesus exercise his power, perform a miracle, produce wine. She simply hands the matter over to Jesus and leaves it to him to decide about what to do.

—From Mary we learn graciousness and readiness to help, but we also learn humility and generosity in accepting God's will, in the confident conviction that, whatever it may be, it will be our, and my own, true good.

Mary represents the new woman, our Mother

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Today we find it very hard to understand Jesus' answer. In the first place, we don't like the way he addresses her: “Woman”. Why doesn't he say: “Mother”?

But this title really expresses Mary's place in salvation history. It points to the future, to the hour of the crucifixion, when Jesus will say to her: “Woman, behold your son” (Jn 19:26). It anticipates the hour when he will make the woman, his Mother, the Mother of all his disciples. On the other hand, the title “Woman”

recalls the account of the creation of Eve: Adam, surrounded by creation in all its magnificence, experiences loneliness as a human being. Then Eve is created, and in her Adam finds the companion whom he longed for; and he gives her the name “woman”.

—In the Gospel of John, then, Mary represents the new, the definitive woman, the companion of the Redeemer, our Mother: the name, which seemed so lacking in affection, actually expresses the grandeur of Mary's enduring mission.

The “yes” of the Son and the “yes” of Mary become a single “yes”

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Today yet we like even less what Jesus at Cana then says to Mary: “Woman, what have I to do with you?” (Jn 2:4).

This should remind us that at the incarnation of Jesus two dialogues took place; the two go together and blend into one. First, there is Mary’s dialogue with the Archangel Gabriel, where she says: “Let it be with me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). But there is a text parallel to this, so to speak, within God himself, which set in motion the Incarnation. The Eternal Son says to the Father: “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me (...). See, I have come to do your will” (Heb 10:5-7; cf. Ps 40:6-8).

—The “yes” of the Son and the “yes” of Mary become a single “yes”. In this double “yes” the obedience of the Son is embodied, and by her own “yes” Mary gives him that body. Ultimately, what each has to do with the other is found in this double “yes” which resulted in the Incarnation.

Jesus transforms the human wedding-feast into an image of the divine wedding-feast (a marriage between God and man)

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Today Jesus does not play games with his power in what is, after all, a private affair. No, he gives a sign, in which he proclaims his hour, the hour of the wedding-feast, the hour of union between God and man.

He does not merely “make” wine, but transforms the human wedding-feast into an image of the divine wedding-feast, to which the Father invites us through the Son and in which he gives us every good thing, represented by the abundance of wine. The wedding-feast becomes an image of that moment when Jesus pushed love to the utmost, let his body be rent and thus gave himself to us for ever, having become completely one with us, a marriage between God and man.

—Jesus' hour has not yet arrived, but in the sign of the water changed into wine, in the sign of the festive gift, he even now anticipates that hour.

Jesus' hour is the Cross; his definitive hour will be his return at the end of time

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Today we can also understand the second part of Jesus' answer: “My hour has not yet come” (Jn 2:4). Jesus never acts completely alone. The Father is always the starting-point of his actions, and this is what unites him to Mary.

She wished to make her request in this same unity of will with the Father. And so, surprisingly, after hearing Jesus' answer, which apparently refuses her request, she can simply say to the servants: “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5). Thus a momentary need is resolved in a truly divine manner and the initial request is superabundantly granted.

—Jesus’ “hour” is the Cross; his definitive hour will be his return at the end of time. He continually anticipates also this definitive hour in the Eucharist, in which, even now, he always comes to us. And he does this ever anew through the intercession of his Mother, through the intercession of the Church, which cries out to him in the Eucharistic prayers: “Come, Lord Jesus!”.