



(ZENIT, June 8, 2016).- Come to the party, for the wine can't be missed!

This was the invitation made by Pope Francis at the General Audience this morning in St. Peter's Square when he reflected on the first of Jesus' miracles, the changing of water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana.

Recalling Mary's observation that the newly married couple ran out of wine, Francis lamented how a wedding party could not be properly celebrated if it lacks this necessary element.

While water is necessary for life, the Pontiff explained, "the wine expresses the abundance and joy of the celebration."

"A wedding party where no wine makes the newlyweds ashamed, imagine you finish the wedding party drinking tea!" Francis said, noting, "The wine is necessary to the party."

In this marriage, the Jesuit Pope explained, a new covenant is stipulated, for not just the servants, but the whole Church are entrusted with the mission of doing: "Whatever He tells you." Serving the Lord, the Pontiff stressed, means hearing and practicing His word, as Mary simply directed the servants to do.

Recalling how the head of the banquet tasted the water that had become wine and said, "You have kept aside the good wine until now," Francis noted how the Lord "continues to reserve the 'best wine' for our salvation."

The Holy Father observed how St. John called these first miracles 'signs' because they were not done to arouse wonder, but to reveal the Father's tender love. Francis exhorted faithful to realize that they are called constantly "to renew their love for the Lord, and to draw new wine, new life, from His saving wounds."

Highlighting that at Cana, Jesus' disciples become His family, Francis reminded faithful that as members of the Lord's family, the Church, 'We are all invited to the wedding, because the new wine is not to be missed!'

Here is a ZENIT translation of the address Pope Francis gave during this morning's general audience in St. Peter's Square.

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Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning!

Before beginning the catechesis, I would like to greet a group of couples, celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary. This truly is "the good wine" of the family! Yours is a testimony that the newlyweds – that I will greet later – and that young people must learn. It is a beautiful testimony. Thank you for your testimony.

After having commented on some parables of mercy, today we reflect on Jesus' first miracle, which the evangelist John calls "signs," because Jesus did not do them to arouse wonder but to reveal the Father's love. John (2:1-11), in fact, narrates the first of these prodigious signs, and it is carried out at Cana of Galilee. It is a sort of "entrance door" on which words and expressions are carved, which illumine the entire mystery of Christ and open the disciples' heart to faith. Let us look at some of them.

In the introduction, we find the expression "*Jesus with His disciples*" (v. 2). Those that Jesus has called to follow Him He has united to Himself in a community and now, as one family, they are all invited to the wedding. Beginning His public ministry at the wedding of Cana, Jesus manifests Himself as the Spouse of the People of God, announced by the prophets, and He reveals to us the profundity of the relationship that unites us to Him: it is a new Covenant of love. What is at the foundation of our faith? — An act of mercy with which Jesus has united us to Himself. And the Christian life is the answer to this love, it is like the story of two who are in love. God and man meet one another, seek one another, find one another, celebrate and love one another: precisely like the loved and beloved in the *Canticle of Canticles*. All the rest comes as consequence of this relationship. The Church is Jesus' family in which His love is poured out; it is this love that the Church cherishes and wishes to give to all.

Understood also in the context of the Covenant, is Our Lady's observation: "*They have no wine*" (v. 3). How is it possible to celebrate the wedding and to feast if what the prophets indicated, as an element typical of the Messianic

banquet, is lacking? (cf. *Amos* 9:13-14; *Joel* 2:24; *Isaiah* 25:6). Water is necessary to live, but wine expresses the abundance of the banquet and the joy of the celebration. It is a nuptial feast in which wine is lacking and the newlyweds are embarrassed by this. But can you imagine ending a wedding feast drinking tea? It would be an embarrassment. Wine is necessary for a celebration. In transforming the water into wine in the jars used “for the rites of purification of the Jews” (v. 6), Jesus carries out an eloquent sign: He transforms the Law of Moses in Gospel, bearer of joy. As John himself says elsewhere: “The Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (1:17).

Mary’s words to the servants crown the nuptial picture: “*Do whatever He tells you*” (v. 5). It’s curious: they are her last words reported by the Gospels.: they are her legacy that she gives to all of us. Today also Our Lady says to us all: “Whatever He says to you – Jesus says to you –, do it.” It is the legacy she has left us: it’s beautiful! It is an expression that recalls the formula of faith used by the people of Israel at Sinai in answer to the promises of the Covenant: “All that the Lord has spoken we will do!” (*Exodus* 19:8). And indeed at Cana the servants obey. “Jesus said to them, ‘Fill the jars with water.’ And they filled them up to the brim. Again He said to them, ‘Now draw some out and take it to the steward of the feast.’ So they took it” (vv. 7-8). In these nuptials the New Covenant is truly stipulated and to the Lord’s servants, namely to the whole Church is entrusted the new mission: “Do whatever He tells you!” To serve the Lord means to listen and to put His Word into practice. It is the simple but essential recommendation of Jesus’ Mother and it is the Christian’s program of life. To draw from the jar is equivalent for each one of us to entrust ourselves to the Word of God to experience its efficacy in life. Then, together with the steward of the banquet who tasted the water that became wine, we too can exclaim: “You have kept the good wine until now” (v. 10). Yes, the Lord continues to keep that good wine for our salvation, just as it continues to gush from the pierced side of the Lord.

The conclusion of the account sounds like a sentence: “This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him” (v. 11). The wedding of Cana is much more than the simple account of Jesus’ first miracle. As a casket, He keeps the secret of His person and the purpose of His coming: the awaited Spouse begins the nuptials that are fulfilled in the Paschal Mystery. In these nuptials, Jesus unites His disciples to Himself with a new and definitive Covenant. At Cana Jesus’ disciples become His family and at Cana the faith of the Church was born. We are all invited to those nuptials, because the new wine is no longer lacking!

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Dear Italian-speaking pilgrims: welcome!

I am happy to receive the pilgrimage of the diocese of Asti, accompanied by the Bishop, Monsignor Ravinale; the young athletes of the Macerata-Loreto Pilgrimage with the “torch of peace,” accompanied by Monsignor Marconi and Monsignor Vecerrica; the “Saint Francis Migrants” Association of the diocese of Siena; the S.O.S. Childrens’ Villages group of Ostuni and UNITALSI of Tuscany. I hope that for all of you this meeting with the Successor of Peter awakens a renewed commitment in favor of peace and of solidarity towards the neediest.

With particular affection, I greet the International Association of the Lasalle Universities; the Delegates of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, gathered in General Assembly, as well as the White Fathers, during their Chapter General. I exhort you to live with joy the mission in fidelity to the Gospel and to your respective charisms.

A special greeting goes to Italian Catholic Action, which re-launches today the prayer experience “*A Minute for Peace*,” culminating in the Eucharistic Celebration in the Basilica of the Holy Spirit in Sassia.

I exhort young people, the sick and newlyweds to pray with special intensity to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary so that they teach us to love God and our neighbor with full dedication.