

## Homily - Year 2 C - January 20, 2019

Red, white, rosé, Californian, Argentinian, New York State, merlot, chardonnay, zinfandel, pinot noir, pinot grigio, cabernet this and sauvignon that. Now, not all of these wines are the same. Nevertheless, they are all wine. Some of them we like; some we dislike; Some are robust; some are weak. Some we like to try; others we forget about after a few sips.

Looking at today's gospel passage we may get caught up in the miracle performed by Jesus, as indeed we should. But, John, the author, does not talk about a miracle. Rather, he says that Jesus performed a sign. I will explain that in a moment.

Think about the wine itself. The wine steward says that the wedding planners made a mistake. They served the cheap wine first, and kept the good wine until later. Custom was, and perhaps still is, you serve the good stuff first, then, when people don't really care any more, you serve the cheap stuff.

So, what is this business about a sign rather than just another miracle? Well, we know that a sign points to something we need to know. Until GPS, we needed road signs to point us in the right direction. Even with GPS, we feel quite content when the metallic voice of some anonymous lady announces a change in direction that is matched by the physical sign that we see along the road.

The sign that John is referring to is the sign of excellence. In the story, we go from cheap wine to excellent wine, and we go from no wine to an overabundance of wine.

Jesus does not deal with the cheap. Jesus wants only what is best. He himself is the best of humanity. He provides us with the best of gifts including God's mercy and his own body and blood in the Eucharist.

We are like that fine wine. You see Jesus took water and made the water into something unimaginable. So too, through the water of baptism Jesus takes a mere human, made in the image and likeness of God, and transforms that person into something even more wonderful - a child of God, a brother or sister of Jesus Christ.

Look again at our second reading in which Paul enumerates divine gifts given to humans, to people. The composite image that we can create from all of this is Jesus' great desire to improve the human condition, to lift people from where they are to a higher level. Certainly, Jesus tended to basic human needs, but he also wanted people to go beyond these needs

and experience their great dignity, what we can easily call their Christian dignity, their call to holiness. Perhaps, the classic example of a call to greater dignity is the story of Mary Magdalene, the great sinner who became the great saint, a story that has been multiplied over the years by many other converts.

The gospel miracles reveal Jesus' great power, but this power is a sign targeted at enhancing the life of humanity. So, too, in our own world, with so much power and potential at our disposal, we should be concerned about enhancing the life of humanity, not degrading or destroying it. We must never forget our call to greatness no matter how appealing other avenues may appear.

Jesus, through Baptism and the many other sacraments, gives us a great dignity. Just as changing water into wine is a sign of Christ's power, so may we in our lives become great signs of the dignity of the Christian life, great signs of Jesus working in and through us.