

WATER INTO WINE: MARRIAGES THAT SUCCEED

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The miracle of turning water into wine seems unimportant. Nobody rose from the dead, nobody's life was transformed. Yet it depicts the way the Lord transforms our lives, and particularly how He helps us when we don't know how to deal with what's in front of us, as is the case with many today in the face of the Coronavirus.

The Lord turned water, not grape juice, into wine. This symbolizes a transformation in us from one thing to something completely different. Water stands for our general understanding of how to live, of how to love another person. Wine is the deep insight that allows us to love that person wisely.

When we start anything new, we know lots of facts about how to do it, and we even have deeper insights – some wine. But life provides more challenges than we can cope with, and we always run out of insight.

The Lord said to fill six water pots with water, enough for several thousand cups of wine! Water pots were used to pour water into basins so guests could wash themselves and be ritually cleansed before entering a house. In our own story, we need to take the water we know – the general truths that tell us how to live – and use them to purify our lives. This takes effort and struggle (symbolized by there being six pots).

Notice that there is not a dramatic moment, no time when we know that the transformation takes place. It just happens. It's like that with us too. We cannot say, "This is the moment I really started loving my spouse." Rather we look back and realize that the Lord has given us a bit more wisdom than we had and that life is getting easier. We feel a gradual increase in the peace and joy in our lives.

Another key aspect of these pots is that they were used ritually, meaning every time one entered a house. Everything we do as a ritual becomes comforting in time, a happy pattern that keeps us safe because we know what to expect. We move beyond needing novelty and start instead to look for safety and comfort, emotions that are much deeper than novelty. When we engage in spiritual practices like a ritual, as regularly and consistently as brushing your teeth, something changes. A transformation occurs.

The master of ceremonies observes that they had served the best wine last, not first. When we are turning to the Lord and purifying our own lives with His truth, we find that the best wine comes later. Life gets more and more enjoyable.

A practical application in today's setting: We are being told to wash our hands, to maintain social distance, to work from home, and the like. That's like water – a group of rules about how to live. If we do these things to keep ourselves safe, it remains like water. But if we instead say to ourselves, "I may be relatively safe, but there are others who are more vulnerable than I am and I want to do everything I can to keep them safe," then we take those rules and make them an expression of spiritual concern for others. The water becomes wine.

Lessons: John 2:1-11; *Divine Providence* 100:2, 102