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The Wedding at Cana

John 2:1–11 · Bloom · Ages 13–19

The wedding at Cana is the first of the 'signs' around which John builds his Gospel (they are often counted as seven), and John says plainly why he wrote them down: so that readers may believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and have life in his name (Jn 20:31).

The story: on the third day there's a wedding at Cana in Galilee. Mary is there, and Jesus and his disciples are guests. The wine runs out, a real social disaster for the hosts. Mary tells Jesus. He answers, calling her 'Woman', that this is not yet a matter for them, since his hour hasn't come. Mary tells the servants to do what he says. Six stone jars, kept for Jewish purification rites, stand nearby; each takes twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus has them filled with water, then has a cupful carried to the man running the feast. It has become wine, better than what was served before. The steward, unaware of what happened, tells the groom he has done the opposite of what hosts usually do: he has saved the best for last. John calls this the first of Jesus' signs: through it his glory shone out, and his disciples' faith began.

What the Church sees here:

Jesus and marriage. The Church sees Jesus' presence at Cana as a confirmation that marriage is good, and a sign that from then on marriage would be an effective sign of Christ's presence: a sacrament (CCC 1613).

Mary's intercession. Mary notices a need, brings it to her Son, and directs people to him. That has been the pattern of her role ever since. The Catechism, reflecting on Cana, describes Mary praying with faith and Jesus answering her (CCC 2618). Catholics don't pray to Mary instead of Jesus; we ask her to pray with us and for us, the way we ask a friend, and she always points beyond herself to her Son (CCC 2679; 2682).

The Eucharist. The Catechism links Cana to the Eucharist: the sign announces the hour of Jesus' glory and the wedding feast of God's kingdom, where the faithful drink the new wine that has become the Blood of Christ (CCC 1335).

Fulfillment. Jars used for washing under the Law are filled to overflowing with something new. John isn't mocking Jewish practice; he's showing that the God of Israel is bringing his promises to fulfillment in Jesus, the best wine saved for last.

Honest questions:

Wasn't Jesus rude to his mother? Calling her 'Woman' was a formal, respectful address; Jesus uses the same word for her from the Cross while entrusting her to the beloved disciple (Jn 19:26). Many Catholic readers also hear an echo of the woman promised in Genesis 3:15. His reply points to his hour, not to disrespect, and he goes on to meet the need she named.

Does this story mean getting drunk is fine? No. Jesus provided wine for a celebration; Scripture treats wine as a gift and condemns drunkenness (Eph 5:18). The Church calls us to temperance (CCC 1809; 2290).

Why did Jesus act if his hour hadn't come? John doesn't explain it. Mary's trust and request were part of how the moment unfolded, which is one reason Catholics trust her intercession.

A step this week: the next time you face a problem, bring it to Jesus in a few honest words, the way Mary did, then ask what he wants you to do.

> **Church teaching note**
> Church teaching: Christ's presence at Cana and the sacrament of Matrimony (CCC 1613); Mary's intercession at Cana (CCC 2618); praying with and to Mary (CCC 2679, 2682); Cana and the Eucharist (CCC 1335); temperance (CCC 1809, 2290). Hearing Gen 3:15 in Jesus' word 'Woman' is a reading from Catholic tradition, not a claim of the text. Jn 19:26, 20:31 and Eph 5:18 are cross-references outside the retold passage.

Talk about it

1. What does Mary do at Cana, and what does that teach about asking her to pray for us?
2. Why might John make a wedding the setting of Jesus' very first sign?
3. How does Cana point ahead to the Eucharist (CCC 1335)?
4. Where in your life do you need to do what Jesus says, even before you understand why?

Key verse: Jn 2:11. Look it up in your Bible.