

Life of the Spirit

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CANA

BY

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*And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee . . .
But Thou hast kept the good wine until now . . . (John 2, 1).*



OW we are going to meditate on the first appearance of our blessed Lady in the Gospel of St John; and it is an exceedingly cheerful thought. You can go to bed and sleep on it; I shall not frighten you.

St John has been telling us of the Eternal Father and the glory of the Son; how the Incarnation seemed to be, as it were, the Eternal Son leaping down as a flash of lightning. Now he introduces the Mother, with her 'kitchen' ways of wisdom. What a change—from the court of heaven to the little kitchen. Of course if we had to do these things we should make an awful bathos of it—but with her it is sublime. You see our dear Lady at once in the kitchen; I have an idea that at the Annunciation our dear Lady was on her knees in the kitchen. I can never quite make out whether she was on her knees to pray or to scrub—for the world required scrubbing—it still does. On her knees certainly, but what she was doing on her knees, I don't know. It is one of the theological problems. And here is the exquisitely beautiful scene of our dear Lady present at a wedding feast. . . . There is something really delicious about this scene—something that requires to be remembered in this age of decaying home life. Our dear Lady was there; and I have always found a great sense of something or other in what is said in the Gospel, 'The Mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and his disciples were invited'. I can quite imagine our dear Lady saying, 'If you invite me you will have to invite him'. And he would say, 'If you invite me the twelve will have to come too'. (I often think that accounts for the failure of the wine: to provide for twelve would exhaust any wine-cellar!). I feel quite a sense of mirth—I have never known whether to laugh or to cry at these things. Some of us have been privileged to be brought up in large families where we know

¹ From a retreat preached at St Dominic's Priory, Stone.

what a mother is. Our dear Lady had been well brought up by St Anne; and what I think so delightful about our Lady is that there was a wedding feast in that place and she was there. It is not worth having a wedding unless you have our Lady there. And she would say, 'I have come only on one condition—that I am in the kitchen'. Of course on a wedding day at least one person has to keep her head. So our Lady said, 'I will be in the kitchen'. They said, 'Of course—you will see that everything goes right'. And she answered, 'I will see to that'.

Oh dear, I just want, as it were, to be pulling at our Lady's apron strings . . . our dear Lady was at the wedding feast herself. There she is. And when there is any trouble, well you know you had better go and ask Mary about it. The Egyptians said, 'Go to Joseph' (Genesis), but the Nazarenes said, 'Go to Mary'. Off they went to Mary. What an exquisite light is shown on the relationship between our Lady and her Son. If any great artist or man of letters, say Shakespeare or Dante, was asked, 'Now would you mind introducing a scene? It is going to be a wedding scene and there is going to be no wine—and our Lady is going to ask our Lord to work a miracle'—the artist would say, 'No thank you—I can't do that; I shouldn't know what to say'—what to make our dear Lady say. Of course our dear Lady knew exactly what to say. She said, 'They have no wine'. She was stating a fact. They had not any wine. The relation is absolutely typical—the relation of a human Mother to a divine Son. It just lifts another little bit of the veil—like that which is moved when St Luke tells you how our Lady and St Joseph find the boy, the almost run-away Boy, and our Lady says, 'Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing'. They had been weeping for him; that was all, but quite enough. He went back with them, for eighteen years. Nothing for himself. *They* are sorrowing . . . what a perfect principle is that: eighteen years ago she had said, 'We are sorrowing'—he had his Father's work to do his Mother's will. And at the end of that time I can hear her saying, 'No, my dear Child, you must leave me; you must go to them . . . you are *theirs*; *they* are sorrowing'. It is our Lady's way of giving to the Incarnate Son his obedience to work. *They* have no wine. She took from her own lips the goblet of wine that was Jesus himself.

This scene of unparalleled tenderness—that tenderness which tends to laughter and tears. That joy which sometimes lends itself to laughter, a laughter that God is pleased with, laughter which in its very depth finds a well of tears. I am never quite certain of myself when I begin to talk of this. I never know quite whether I shall break down. The love in it is so ~~simple~~ exquisite . . . that Mother's love, that

Child's love, that love of Jesus, love of the Mother for her Son, the love of that Son for the Mother, the love of both for me! We can think about it—and if God gave us tonight for instance to dream about it, what dreams would be ours! . . . We should meditate again and again on the marriage feast of Cana. . . . What can give us the sense of home? I do not know—the sense of just being loved. Of course, love always means serving in some way; the greater the love the greater service rendered. If our love for our dear Lady is great and understanding, the water of religious life shall be turned into wine. And every moment in our life will be too good to be true . . . of course, supernaturally true!

THE MIND OF CHRIST

BY

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Let this mind also be in you which was in Christ Jesus.



GOOD exercise for Lent would be the study and sharing in the mind of Christ Jesus as it was immediately before and during his Passion.

St John in his record of the discourse of the Last Supper enables us to enter deeply into the mind of our Lord immediately before his Passion. He was about to be 'made sin for us', to identify himself with and do penance and make atonement for the sins of the whole world from the very beginning down to the end of time. He was about to become 'a worm and no man', 'a man of sorrows', abject and despised, and he foreknew to the minutest detail all the agony and dereliction which lay before him. And yet, his mind did not apparently dwell on these things, but on his inner life as the Second Person of the adorable Trinity and on the participation in that life by man which he had been sent to bring about, and to which his Passion and death were directed. 'I came forth from the Father and I came into the world; and now I leave the world and I return to the Father.' Here we have his eternal and temporal processions clearly referred to.

Verbum manens apud Patrem.

This last discourse is full of the cry 'Abba, Father', which was the cry of the whole being of the eternal and only-begotten Son; and the same attitude reveals itself on the few occasions when the silent Word emerged from his silence during the Passion, for almost every time, the word 'Father' is on his lips: