

God's Love Doesn't Run Out

20 January 2019

Reading: John 2:1-11

Dear God

Open the Bible to us in fresh and exciting way.

Through Jesus we ask this.

We read today, "There was a wedding and Jesus and his disciples were invited and the wine ran out."

It would be difficult to be invited to a more chaotic wedding as was held in July 1973. For a start the vicar rang in sick and one had to be brought out of retirement. Matters worsened when the groom put the ring on his bride's finger and she blacked out into a coma for 20 minutes. While she was carried off the choir sang Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring to disguise the slapping and splashes of water to try and revive her. Once the bride had regained consciousness the happy couple made their way down the aisle amidst confetti to the going away car which contained a cement mixer. The groom explained to the guests that the hotel he had booked for the honeymoon had burned down and instead they were going to spend the honeymoon building a septic tank. Strangely the couple didn't want to be named.

There are lots of pressures to get things right at a wedding and one thing they needed to get right in Cana was the wine. It was so embarrassing. The guests were all there and the party was going well. The tendency in weddings of Jesus time was to party for days but it would have been a disgrace to run out of wine. Mary turns to Jesus to rescue the situation. The servants get 6 jars of 30 gallons each and Jesus turns the water used for foot washing and ritual washing into wine. Not just any

wine but the very finest wine. And not just a little bit but 180 gallons - enough for everyone.

We are so used to things running out. We have little sayings to remind us. “You can’t spend it twice”, “It only goes so far”, “We must be careful.” There is never enough money, or people, or time to do all we want to do. But life with Jesus is different. When we remember to turn to Jesus we discover that with him there is something that doesn’t run out. In fact, the more we share it the more there seems to be.

One time when things had badly run out was during the Irish potato famine. There were several waves of famine and one was in 1840. While we were signing treaties, Ireland was in the grip of yet another food shortage. In a farmyard down the road from the Mount Melleray Abbey is a most curious object. It is a long wooden box about one metre deep, three metres long and a metre and a half wide. In some ways it resembles a coffin. But the monks treasure it as a symbol of life and God’s provision. As a Benedictine monastery they have as part of their rule of life the obligation of hospitality. From St Benedict they also have this obligation: “When a stranger comes bow low to the ground, greet them as if you were greeting Christ himself, even the poor, most especially the poor.”

In 1840 the community of monks numbered 100. Each morning at the door of the monastery upwards of 70 people from the village would gather for food. This box was used to distribute the meal to the poor. Just after Easter the Abbot had to go to London. He gave very clear instructions to the brothers, “While I’m away you must never stop feeding the poor. In the box is all you need.” The Abbot left promising to be away just weeks. Each day the monks would feed themselves and the poor from this one box. But after weeks there was no sign of the Abbott. The brothers kept on feeding the poor and themselves from this bin. The Abbot

was seriously delayed. Twelve weeks passed before he returned. He inquired of the brothers on his final return, “Did you feed the poor?” “Everyday Father,” they said, “and the bin never ran out.” On the bin today is a small notice. It reads: “During the famine of 1840, the community and more than 70 poor people were fed daily with meal stored in this bin. After three months the supply was found undiminished.” The photo I saw in a book called it, “The bin of unexhausted supply.”

We are so used to things running out in our world. There isn't enough money, or people, or time we say. So this inexhaustible bin seems a tall tale.

But what if those monks were tapping into something that doesn't run out? What if they had discovered something that, when it is given away, multiplies?

The inexhaustible supply that I refer to is God's love. The more we share it the more we have to give. At the heart of God is an inexhaustible source of love. It's like a well that never runs dry. And we see it best in Jesus. John places the miracle of Cana as the very first of Jesus miracles to remind us that in Jesus love never runs dry and that in his kingdom there is enough for all.

In our consumer world we only turn to Jesus as a last resort. John the Gospel writer is inviting us to not leave it to the last but to turn to him first in our lives.

Right here today there is living proof of his inexhaustible love. In a moment we will eat bread and drink wine. He offered himself once on holy Thursday, but think how many people have been fed from that one cup and one loaf. Even today beginning in New Zealand, thousands of millions

of people will be feed from that one cup and one loaf. There will be and there is enough for all.

This new year let's pick up on John's invitation to the wedding. May we allow Jesus to take the everyday water of our troubled lives and transform it into Gospel wine. Then we will discover that the love of Jesus is an inexhaustible well which will fill us to the brim with abundant joy.