

In the Gospel reading for this Sunday, Jesus attends a wedding in Cana. As the wedding progresses, the wine, which has been provided by the groom's family, runs out.

Now, you may have been at a party once or twice when the wine ran out, and so you know that the announcement; "there is nothing more to drink"; causes one of two reactions: general panic, or a mass exodus toward the door! However, neither of these are the appropriate behavior. And perhaps that was true in Galilee, too, because from the Gospel we get a sense of urgency- a sense that it's a real problem that the wine is gone and it might be best if not everyone finds that out. Jesus' mother comes to tell him about it, and we get a clear idea that she is waiting for him to do something about it, and fix the problem. It also shows how observant a mother is, having seen other things he has done and yet waiting for the right moment to share that knowledge with her son and other people. So Jesus instructs the servants to fill the clay jars to the brim with water- just regular old water.

And then without any fanfare, without any flash of light or clap of thunder, or great pronouncement, Jesus tells the servants to take the wine to the chief steward. When the chief steward tastes it, he finds that not only has the water been turned to wine, it has been turned into a better wine than was previously served at the wedding.

The message of this Gospel lesson is pretty clear: Jesus takes what is empty, and fills it. And not only does he fill what is empty, but he replaces the emptiness with something better than what was there before.

We all have emptiness in our lives. We may feel emotional emptiness- disconnected from the people we love, out of step with society or our community, overwhelmed by problems in our personal lives that we don't know how to fix.

We may feel professional emptiness, and worry that the work we are doing is not making a difference in the world. Or perhaps that professional emptiness is more profound, and we are unemployed, wondering if we will be able to rejoin the workforce and support our families.

Maybe our emptiness comes from a whole basket full of troubling concerns: unemployment, marital strife, and ill health. Research has clearly shown that financial concerns often lead to other problems- particularly relationships

and health issues- and so, for many in our community, every time the statement arrives from the bank, “emptiness” takes on a whole new level of meaning, and we can’t help but wonder if we will ever get back to where we were, financially, emotionally, and professionally.

All of these worries, and all of these feelings of emptiness, are valid concerns. And they certainly seem far more important than running out of wine at a wedding. But listen to the end of this Gospel, and hear what it tells us.

Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him. ( John 2:11)

What we have learned in the last 2000 years since this wedding is that this was just the first of many, many signs to come. The revelation of the glory of Jesus Christ that took place when Jesus changed water to wine at the wedding in Galilee was just a taste- a tiny taste- of the power of Jesus to work within our lives and change things for the better.

When Jesus transformed the water to wine at Cana, he changed something ordinary- water that was used to cleanse the hands, faces, and feet of dusty wedding guests-into something extraordinary- wine. He not only met the needs of his people, he far exceeded them, and gave them something that was even better than what they’d had before.

And perhaps most important to remember in 2010, when many are struggling and facing hardship and wondering how they will ever get back to where they were.....at the wedding in Cana, in the first of many signs to come, Jesus took the empty vessels, and he filled them....not with a drop, not halfway, but filled them to overflowing.

Where there was emptiness, Jesus gave abundance.

In our parish we are undergoing change. We are praying faithfully that a new Rector will come forth and be made known to us. We are continuing to meet in fellowship and for education, but we have had to change the way we do this, in order to operate more efficiently in lean times. We are transforming the way our church looks, in order to increase the number of people we can help, and the ways in which we can serve our community-an example is the Loaves and Fishes and Room in the Inn spaces- a community

that needs help more than ever- but we've been slowed down by the weather and challenged by the economy. This is the most important year for our annual giving campaign, as we begin to have more space and handicapped access to that space to serve more of God's people. We've had obstacles on many fronts- but we continue to move forward. How? Wouldn't it have been easier to say, "Let's just stay where we are and wait it out and see if things get better and then we'll do something?"

There is a simple answer to the question of how we continue to move forward in challenging times.

### WE MOVE FORWARD-

not because we are cockeyed optimists, or because we have our heads buried in the sand like ostriches and can't see what's going on around us, or even because we are stubborn and bull-headed- although I have heard those words used to describe someone here at this church, Deacon somebody or other.

But none of those things are the reason we continue to move forward. We continue to move forward in the face of obstacles because we believe.

We believe in the message of the Gospel we have heard today. We believe that Jesus will fill our emptiness, and to fill it to overflowing, with something better than it was before.

This belief applies not only to the life of the church, but to our personal lives, as well. When you consider how you will move through your own personal trials and tribulations, you must remember the Gospel, and recognize that you, also, are a vessel of God, waiting to be filled to the brim. You must remember that your faith gives Jesus the power to work within you, so that in your times of plenty and in your times of need, you must be open to the possibility of being transformed in ways you could never imagine, from something ordinary to something extraordinary. You must know in your heart that the power possessed by Jesus Christ is more than enough to meet your needs, more than enough to fill to overflowing the vessels of God's people, and more than enough to replace emptiness with abundance.

When you consider whether, and how, to stay engaged in the life of this church by becoming more involved in the annual giving campaign; look at

your calendar and decide whether or not you will allocate your time toward outreach or solely toward yourself; ask yourself whether or not you will remain in the dark, or continue to actively seek out a relationship with God; then look at your income and consider your pledge to God returning at least 10% of what God has given you the ability to earn. You must consider the places in your life that are empty and ask yourself: Will I let God fill them? Do I have the faith to believe that what is now empty will in the future be filled to overflowing with something even better than before? The Bible is full of the promise of a bountiful reward to those that believe. Over and over again, we are told that those who trust in the Lord will come to fulfillment. Jeremiah sums it up nicely in chapter 29, verse 11: For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Are you trusting in the Lord?

If so, how will you put your trust in action?

“Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house; says the Lord of hosts, put me to the test, see if I will open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.” Malachi 3:10

Look around you, the people on the streets, and see their needs and know they would gladly stand in your shoes if they were given the chance. Look around you and see the light of the Lord that surrounds us in this place. Know that all that you see here was because the people before you wanted you to continue on to serve this community and they had faith in our Lord Jesus Christ that they would be filled with abundance.

Know that if all of us pledge to the annual giving campaign that what is now empty will soon be filled to overflowing.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, whose abundance is promised to us through faith, and whose love is steadfast in times of need and in times of plenty, be with us, and remain in our hearts. May we persevere in the times of trial, recognizing those whose needs are greater than ours, and may they share in the life of this parish, and that we trust the emptiness in our lives will be filled to

overflowing through the love and power of your son, our savior, Jesus Christ. Amen