



AND when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. ⁴ Jesus saith unto her, *Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.* ⁵ His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. ⁶ And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. ⁷ Jesus saith unto them, *Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.* ⁸ And he saith unto them, *Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast.* And they bare it. ⁹ When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, ¹⁰ And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. (John 2:3-10)

This was the first miracle wrought by our Lord and is testimony of the profound importance the Lord places upon the marriage institution (being and the express image of that relationship existing between the Church and her Bridegroom – the Lord Jesus Christ). The time frame is the season of Passover (Spring). ¹³ *And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.* (John 2:13) There can be no doubt that the beverage consumed was fermented wine. We know this for several reasons, but two only will suffice for this devotion:

1. No one consumes such an abundance of pure grape juice at a banquet. Whatever that drunk, it made them merry so much so that they could not tell the quality of the wine served last;
2. The season of Passover is in the Spring. The grape harvest occurs in the fall in the Holy Land. No grape juice could remain unfermented over a period of six or more months.

So, when the wine was exhausted, Mary appealed to her Son to satisfy the deficit. This He did by transforming six large earthen pots of water (brim-full) to wine. It was the very best wine which was to be the last served.

The red grape wine is symbolic of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was shed for us as a propitiation for our sins. The red color, moreover, is symbolic of that same sacrifice. It represents His sinless blood! Just as the wine of grapes gives a warm and joyful physical sensation, so does the blood of Christ impart a spiritual joy beyond and warmth beyond our imaginations to comprehend. And the wonder of it all is that He often saves our best wine for last.

We often go through life with varying degrees of commitment and devotion to God – not that we lose faith – but that we are distracted by troubles in the world and of the heart. When we do so, we are as the Prodigal Son going into a far country where we are ill-treated by strangers who love us not. Just as the Prodigal came to himself after a time of want, degradation, and depravity, we come to our senses and return on that long road of abandonment which we journeyed in leaving the presence of the Father. We never ceased to be His child, but we placed ourselves outside His arms of grace and protection for a time.

Having mortal frames susceptible to the false illusions of the world and its shiny temptations, we may have forgotten that we are His child. The same elements of the world that drew us away from our Father are the ones that may awaken our spirits to our profound need. The mist and vapors covering the illusions that drew us away began to fade away and we begin to see clearly the ugliness of those things which drew us away in the first place. So we return. He has never forgotten us but watches day and night the road on which we departed. As we emerge on the horizon, ragged and covered in filth, He recognizes us and runs to meet us.

Those temptations that have deceived and entrapped us are the wines of the world – the riotous atmosphere of the drunken pub. But those wines will expire along with the false hopes they promised, and we are left without wine to endure the hurtful challenges of the world. It is that moment – the time when we are holding on to the last knot in the rope – that our Lord comes to us in renewed soul and spirit, and we cry aloud – Save Me! There is no more of our old wine left to tide our drunken spirits on, so we must call out in desperation for succor.

Our Lord is a Lord of Miracles and Mercy. He will turn our empty jars into overflowing wine of gladness. Instead of the depravity of drunken stupor, we become drunk on the heavenly wine of His Word and Spirit. That is the true spiritual Wine of His Spirit unmixed and unadulterated by any mixture of water as is done in the taverns by men. *22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: (Isaiah 1:22)* Our Lord does not mix His wine with water, He converts His Water of Life to the very Blood of Life: *11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. (Leviticus 17:11)*

Our frail works are all as filthy rags. We can in no wise atone for our own sins being evil as we are in imagination. There are no good works we can perform that can save us – only the blood sacrifice of a righteous Lord. *53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. 54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. 56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. 58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.* Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Living Word, and His Word is our Bread of Life which we must consume daily for our health. His Blood is our soul's Spirit which is our teacher and companion to *call to our remembrance all things written about our Lord in His Word.*

There are two salient verses on the nature of the wine of the Lord upon which Illyricus comments:

1. *8 For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.*
2. *17 Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out. (Isaiah 51:17)*

The wine of the Lord must be fully consumed in its time of visitation – there is no stale wine or blessing. But His wrath is consumed in leftover dregs which we have rejected through disobedience of His Word. So, says Illyricus: *As the cup signifies its part of the cross and castigation, which God in His own time distributes or gives out to everyone: so the dregs of that draught do signify the most bitter part of the calamity or punishment.*

The Lord counseled we shall drink from the same cup from which He drank. Our Holy Communion Service observes that fact in the elements of Bread and Wine. The Cup from which our Lord drank led, ultimately, to His resurrection and ascension; however, before those events there stood, brooding and singular, that terrible Cross of pain and suffering, death and burial. Perchance our cups may lead to hardship, rejection by society, and even death, but after – the resurrection.

AND *he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. ²⁴ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. ²⁵ For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? ²⁶ For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.*

Bearing our crosses daily and following Jesus may lead to places we would rather not go, but go we must if we follow Him.

Perhaps it is time to shed ourselves of that old wine of the world with its maladies and derangements and take up the best wine which our Lord offers in the Spirit.