

A Mother, a Wedding, some Wine, some Friends

Good Friday-C

April 22, 2011

A mother, a son, a wedding, some wine, and a community of friends. In the beginning of Jesus' ministry, at the end of Jesus' ministry, these are what stand. Mary, wine, a wedding, and a community of friends. These are the marks of the life of Jesus; these are the marks of his death. This is the life we claim, as Jesus' disciples, and the death into which we are born at our baptism.

It's a very intimate scene, one that portrays the heart of God and the work of God. As he prepares to die, Jesus creates the Beloved Community handing his mother over to the love and care of his beloved disciple and handing his beloved disciple over to the love and care of his mother. Some of us have shared the blessing of being present with friends or family as they moved toward death. We've witnessed those final moments when a parent says to a child, "Take care of your mother," or "Take care of your child." There comes a time when, willingly or not, we *will* pass on everything—our relationships, our history, our houses, our gardens, our bank accounts, our jobs, even our clothes. We will spill everything we are and have on those who will remain.

You know that question we ask ourselves about what would we take with us if our homes were burning and we *had* to leave? What is important enough to hold onto, what is important enough to be passed on? That's always the question for us, isn't it? At the end of one era and the beginning of another, what will we bestow on those we love? What will be held in others' hands when we leave everything behind us but the Spirit God loaned us, the Spirit that turned our heap of dust and ashes into life?

What Jesus passes on to us today is the fullness of his own life, poured out into

our emptiness, the surprise of being so Beloved, a draft as intoxicating to us as those huge jars of water he turned into wine at the wedding in Cana. “It is finished,” Jesus says. “It is complete. There's nothing left to pour out.” Jesus’ ministry has come full circle. In Jesus’ end is his beginning, in us. In the completion of his ministry is the beginning of ours.

Mary, wine, a wedding, and a community of friends to carry on. As his life flows away, ours is becoming full. In his loss, we gain a family. In his perfection, we are claimed as God’s own Beloved Ones. In his leaving, we are invited to the final consummation of God and humanity. In his death, Jesus blesses and bequeaths a union of God with humankind, the marriage of divine purpose and human purpose, of divine love and human love.

Mary, wine, a wedding, and a community of friends. The heavenly banquet is not yet begun, but still Jesus sparks outrageous miracle, turning the workaday water of our lives into the wine of loving service. Even in death, Jesus transforms our little everyday lives with overflowing power and passion, simply by doing what we all do at the end—handing over his life to others. “My ministry is now yours,” Jesus shows us. “My work is full-filled and it spills over into you. I have drunk to its dregs the cup of love and sacrifice the Father set before me. I have filled to its brim the cup the father now sets before you. Drink it cup down, pour it all out. Wash, comfort, feed--share the banquet of among you.

Mary, wine, a wedding, friends— that’s the only inheritance worth giving. One day we, too, will hand it on. We will leave these costly celebrations to the family we have created. This is the greatest truth we can proclaim to our descendents— that God makes all things new. So go ahead, love and serve each other, in all these ways: as mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, with weddings and wine, and among a community of friends. Now is love's transforming work finished. Now is Love's

transforming work begun.

Mary, wine, a wedding, friends. This is the life we claim, and the death into which we are born.