*Most loving Father, whose will it is for us to give thanks for all things, to fear nothing but the loss of you, and to cast all our care on you who care for us: Preserve us from faithless fears and worldly anxieties, that no clouds of this mortal life may hide from us the light of that love which is immortal, and which you have manifested to us in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  Amen.*

Good Morning!

Weddings, by and large, are a big deal. Whether they are a simple and intimate ceremony, or the big time blow out, weddings are of course important to the folks involved. And because they are so important, and because they usually entail some kind of celebration, they tend to memorable well beyond the families involved. Myself, well, I've been involved in my fair share of weddings as a guest and as a priest and I've certainly got my fair share of fun stories from most of them. As a connoisseur of awkward social situations, one of my favorite wedding memories comes, unsurprisingly from a reception. The couple were super cool, and we had a great time putting together a short, classy, faithful, and traditional ceremony in a nontraditional setting. After the wedding itself, the space was flipped over for the party. I, as often happens, was seated

with some randoms and held my own with an armchair agnostic telling me all the neat things they saw on the internet that contradicted a two-thousand-year-old faith tradition. The father of the bride had asked to make an address to the gathered guests, I figured something like a protracted toast. He was a pastor in another denomination, so I figured he'd say something prayerful and hopeful about the new couple. But it ended up being a very, very long poem, in almost perfect meter, that honestly kind of awkwardly came off as an ode to the groom. It was wild. I sat there sipping on a Moscow mule and my whole table turned to me and in unison mouthed "what was that?" I told them I plan the ceremony and was off the clock and took one last sip before sliding out. Weddings, y'all. I'm sure most of us has a wild story from a wedding.

This morning we get to read one of my absolute favorite stories about a wedding and about Jesus: the wedding at Cana. I think there is so much to love about this story, and I think St. John definitely wanted his readers to enjoy this little slice of life story from Jesus' early ministry. It is also apparent, with just a little bit of background to, that there is lot of things for us to nerd out about within this text, so many cool callbacks and even call forwards for careful Bible readers. And it all comes together at this wedding, made memorable by Jesus' first sign of power, the ultimate act of keeping the party going, when Jesus turned water into really good wine.

And at the narrative level of 'awesome party with Jesus' is where we can find some interesting details. Notice that the actual couple being married are not really mentioned by name at all. That's a detail I've always thought was interesting for John's lack of interest. Cana itself is also not an especially well-known place and was not mentioned by name anywhere in the OT. Therefore, I think that John just wanted us readers to think: 'Jesus,' 'disciples,' and 'wedding' without getting too bogged down in distracting particulars. But we are *definitely* meant to notice that the party raged so hard that the hosts ran out of wine. The narrator says it. Our Lady says it. The party was definitely at risk of falling apart. But Mary pulls it together (almost in spite of Jesus, who seems a little reticent at first) and gets him on the case. He had the servants fill up these pretty impressive jars full of water, and without much aplomb (or even attention) at all, turned the water inside into wine. Jesus didn't say a word about it, leaving the steward to taste the wine and realize that it was the good stuff. The steward even complimented the bridegroom for his extreme hospitality: the good stuff usually goes out while the less good stuff is for when the guests are too well marinaded to care. Jesus, the savior of all mankind, was indeed the unsung savior of this random wedding party in some random town in the backwater of Galilee. And John acclaims this as the first important manifestation of his power. It's so great to know that Jesus' big reveal of his might was a divine shortcut of a beer run to save a party. I love it so much.

But deeper still, we find all these fantastic connections to the entire Bible. It's not idly that this piece begins with the time frame of "the third day." We should read or hear that in the same way that we read or hear the beginning of this Gospel: "In the beginning." That should sound pretty familiar if you've ever tried to read the Bible from, well, the beginning. It turns out that this little story about a wedding is part of a really cool design motif in John's Gospel where we readers are supposed to connect the story of the Messiah with the story of Creation, all the way back in Genesis 1. But for John, and the Church ever since, we are party to a new creation in Christ and that was being made manifest even in the water into wine wedding party at Cana. Indeed, the new creation that was won by his own rising on that third day of the first Easter, the Day of Resurrection. The wine itself takes a special significance when we see that John was careful enough to point to the fact that the jars were used for ritual purification. By adding the fullness of wine to such an important ritual vessel, Jesus was in a sense, showing how he was fulfilling the laws that made the purification rites so critical. And looking ahead to the rest of the New Testament, this wedding at Cana helps us to consider that famous image of Revelation, the wedding feast of the lamb, which we prefigure in our weekly celebration of the Eucharist.

This wedding at Cana, in the way that John presents it, almost looks like Jesus' wedding celebration. It's a celebration of the Word becoming married to the flash in Jesus' body. It's a celebration of the wedding to come between God and his favorite human creation, a wedding wrought by his cross and passion. It's a celebration of the wedding of the Bridegroom Jesus and his Bride which is the Body of the Church. It's a celebration of the wedding between Heaven and Earth, that we read about in the last wonderful chapters of the Revelation to John. Yes, it was an awesome party with great drinks. But it’s also heralding the new world of Jesus' reign, a reign long expected throughout the ages of God's people.

As God's people, this morning we are given clear direction in this text, even with and perhaps in spite of its wonderful little details. The truth is, for disciples of Jesus, Mary herself uttered the most important line in the entire episode when she turned to the servants and said, "Do whatever he tells you." Just as every word of these stories was carefully chosen by their writers, especially John, that command from Jesus' mother comes from her own faithfulness to God's call and exhorts Jesus' people to faithful obedience to Christ's commands. Where she said it is of prime importance, my friends, because it reminds us that we serve Jesus, and obey him in joy. The life of faith is, in many ways, is an extension of this wedding at Cana, even with all the trials we face. Jesus provides us the means to keep the feast going via the gift of the bread of his body, the good wine of his blood. And thus, Jesus provides us the means to be part of his project of New Creation, to be the people God meant for us to be from the beginning: his loving ambassadors to the world. So, brothers and sisters, I pray that this week we would be found as servants heeding Mary's call to do as Christ says, loving our neighbors and offering our lives for the common good. And as we enjoy our own sacramental wedding feast here at the altar, we rejoice that God would

Continue [His] loving-kindness to those who know [Him,] \*

and [His] favor to those who are true of heart.

To God be all Glory from age to age. Amen.