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General audience: the wedding at Cana, first sign of Christ's mercy in

Vatican City, 8 June 2016 – Pope Francis dedicated the catechesis of this week's Wednesday general audience to the first of Jesus' signs, the transformation of water in to wine at the wedding at Cana, following Mary's request. However, as the Holy Father explained, the Gospel account is far more than the narration of this miracle: it holds the secret of the person of Christ and the reason for His coming. It is a sort of "entrance" on which we find words and expressions that illuminate the mystery of the Son of God nad introduce the disciples to faith.

In the introduction we encounter the expression "Jesus and His disciples". Those whom Jesus calls to follow Him joined in a community and, as in a single family, are all invited to the wedding. By initiating his public ministry in the wedding at Cana, Jesus reveals Himself as the spouse of the people of God, foretold by the prophets, and uncovers the depth of the relationship that unites us to Him: that of a new covenant of love. In this way, our faith is based, said the Pope, on "an act of mercy by which Jesus bonded us to Him. Christian life is the response to this love; it is like the story of two beloveds. God and man seek each other out, they encounter each other, they celebrate and they love each other: just like the enamoured in the Canticle of Canticles. All the rest is a consequence of this relationship. The Church is the family of Jesus into which He pours His love; it is this love that the Church safeguards and wishes to give to all."

Mary's phrase, "They have no wine", is also to be understood in the light of the covenant, as it is impossible to celebrate a wedding without what the prophets indicating as a fundamental element of the Messianic banquet. "Water is necessary to live, but wine expresses the abundance of the banquet and the joy of celebration. Transforming into wine the water in the jars, used for the purification rites of the Jews, Jesus makes an eloquent sign: that of the transformation of the Law of Moses into the Gospel, the bearer of joy. As St. John says elsewhere, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ".

Mary's words to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you", complete the spousal image of Cana and are her last two words in the Gospel: they are the legacy that she leaves to all of us. "It is an expression that recalls the formula of faith used by the people of Israel to Sinai in response to the promises of the Covenant: 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do'", observed Francis. "Indeed, at Cana, the servants obey. Jesus said to them, 'fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim ... 'Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast'. During this wedding, a new Covenant is truly stipulated and to the servants of the Lord – that is, all the Church –

a new mission is entrusted: 'Do whatever He tells you'. Serving the Lord means listening to His Word and putting it into practice. It is the simple but essential recommendation of the Mother of Jesus and it is the programme of life for the Christian. For each one of us, drawing from the jar is equivalent to entrusting oneself to the Word of God, to experience its efficacy in life. So, along with the master of the banquet, who tasted the water that had become wine, we too can exclaim, 'You have kept the good wine until now'. Indeed, the Lord continues to reserve the best wine for our salvation, just as it continues to flow from the pierced side of the Lord."

The conclusion of the passage seems like a sentence: "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him." Therefore, the wedding at Cana is much more than the simple account of Jesus' first miracle. He safeguards the secret of His person and the reason for His coming, as if in a casket: the awaited Spouse initiates the wedding that will be fulfilled in the Paschal mystery. "In this wedding, Jesus binds His disciples to Him with a new and definitive Covenant", concluded the Pope. "At Cana, Jesus' disciples become His family and the faith of the Church is born. We are all invited to these wedding celebrations, as new wine will never more be lacking."
