

S CLEMENT'S CHURCH PHILADELPHIA
Homily for the Second Sunday after Epiphany, 14 January, 2024

✠ In Nomine

From prior experience here, some of you will remember that in today's Gospel about the wedding in Cana of Galilee, I'm obsessed with those six, empty, stone, water jars standing silently in a nuptial venue buzzing with activity.

Each of these large vessels has its own properties there being no such thing as a perfect match in clay at least. Each is its own echo-chamber where the sounds of the room swirl and blend.

They stand together in good sensible order no doubt under the watchful eye of the *Maitre-d'*, in this story the *Arxiriklinos*. In these Clementine environs this would surely be the Sacristan!

In standing together these six vessels also stand at least slightly apart.

For me, the bottom line is this. I think these six stone water jars are us. Made, as pottery. Fashioned to resemble; (in our case to resemble God, in whose image we are created), yet even given such resemblances we remain manifestly unique, each one of us a vessel of clay summoned to be at the ready -- like *mis-en-place* in a kitchen -- watching, waiting, patiently or maybe not patiently, perhaps anxiously waiting for whatever is "next."

Next is rather a lot in this Gospel.

Something certainly "happens" as the Blessed Virgin Mary spots the plight of the bride and bridegroom at Cana. She knew before they did that the wine had given out.

Next Mary succinctly summarizes the situation for her Son: "They have no wine." After this she instructs the *diakono*i to pay heed to her Son. "Do whatever he tells you."

Then Christ takes over. "Fill them to the brim," he commands the servants. Fill them to the brim! Just what we will be doing at the Baptismal Font at Easter.

By the way, the waiters, servants are "deacons" in this story as I am at this mass. Thank God our cruets for water and wine are not so heavy to lift as those brim full stone jars must have been.

Are those jars insentient? Can they feel? Do they? Maybe very little, maybe way too much.

Ezekiel prophecies a dramatic transformation we might consider, promising for God:
A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

A new heart indeed! Recall the disciples on the Road to Emmaus sorting out their encounter with our Risen Lord:

Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

That's "heart" in the singular! See how soon they are referring to one collective, burning heart, these first Christians.

On a day as cold as this, indeed in a world that feels that way every day for some, there is comfort in knowing that Christ's heart burns with ardent love, knowing that by his command, at his word, our watery wearinesses, our sweats, cold or febrile, even our tears can change to new wine, the best wine ever save for that by which Christ gives us his own self, body and blood in Holy Communion.

As ever Charles Wesley is very helpful here offering us this dialogue with Christ:

Dark and cheerless is the morn
 Unaccompanied by Thee;
 Joyless is the day's return,
 Till Thy mercy's beams I see,
 Till Thou inward light impart,
 Glad my eyes, and warm my heart.
 Dayspring from on high be near
 Daystar, in my heart appear.
 Fill me, Radiancy divine,
 Scatter all my unbelief;
 More and more Thyself display
 Shining to the perfect day.

Fr. Richard Alton