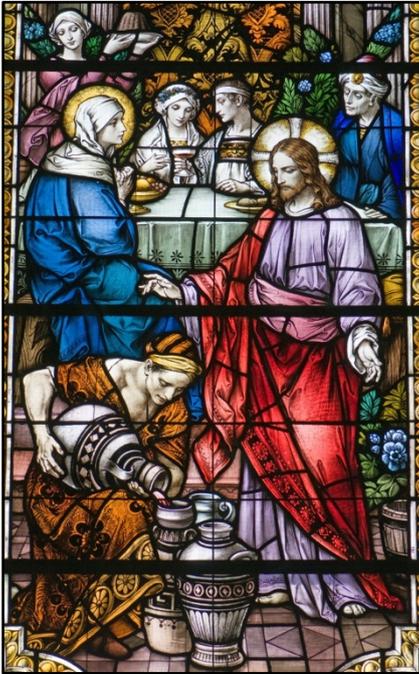


# Thought for the day: 14-20 June 2021

## by Stephane McCarthy

Monday 14<sup>th</sup>



The marriage at Cana is one of my favourite passages in the gospel; it always lifts my spirits and makes me feel happy and smile because it shows God and Jesus' humanity, his human touch on so many levels.

It's an experience most of us can relate to so easily: celebrating a marriage and enjoying a wedding feast. And what is the worst that could happen at a wedding feast after the wedding vows have been lovingly exchanged? Running out of wine, of course.

Seeing that has happened here, Mary, as a typical mother, wants to avert the disaster, and simply tells Jesus to do something. Mary ignores his initial refusal, knowing that he will come round to her way of thinking.

And Jesus duly obliges, secretly but dramatically, by turning the water in the 6 jugs into wine. We then learn that each jug holds 30 to 40 gallons! A staggering quantity for even the largest wedding, and especially as they had already drunk the wine which had run out.

This reminds us of the incredible plenitude of God, his sheer lavishness – he never does anything in half measure, just loves to go completely overboard. We look at the size of the universe and the billions of galaxies we are now discovering, and all of it created within the last 14 billion earth years - yet in distance, in space time, far more than 14 billion light years.

Yet he always remains humble. Only a few servants knew that Jesus had performed the miracle, that first miracle of his ministry. He left it to others to take the credit.

As for the quality of that wine. We are told how good it is. Hardly surprising. Can you begin to imagine just how good it must have tasted? What a way to introduce us to the start of Jesus' public ministry.

## **Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup>**

Table fellowship – this is a fascinating phrase to describe a recurring theme in the gospels.

Just stop and think how frequently references are made in the gospels to breakfasts, dinners, food and drink, literally and metaphorically.

In most of the events described, Jesus is either arriving at a dinner, enjoying a meal, or leaving a dinner. Eating and drinking with others was a very important part of that culture which Jesus participated in enthusiastically.

Jesus greatly enjoyed the company of others, eating and drinking with them. And he didn't discriminate at all. On the contrary, he enjoyed eating and drinking with a great diversity of people, including prostitutes, tax collectors and even pharisees. He loved the company of everyone, but had a particular soft spot for the marginalised. Zacharias, come down from that tree, I'm eating at your house today! It was all such a continual scandal for his enemies. But for us, it simply shows God's love for everyone. As Bill reminded us recently, the prostitutes will be first...



And for us this table fellowship is another way Jesus helps us to relate to him in a typically human way, and to feel his love and closeness.

## **Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup>**

Heaven is often described as an eternal banquet. We can certainly relate to that metaphor. I do a lot with French blood coursing through me. Who else but the French could tell you 'l'appetit vient en mangeant' (appetite comes with eating) when you're not feeling hungry.

Humanly speaking, a banquet conjures up so many enjoyable thoughts: sharing the company of others, exciting conversation with the gratification which wonderful food and drink bring, as well as music and laughter. All our senses engaged and gratified.



This sharing and gratification give us an insight into what the eternal banquet of Heaven must be like. We can only have a glimpse from here, of course. How else could it be with our finite minds. But we know it involves relationship and love because that is the Trinity. We can get that glimpse with the

banquet metaphor.

Human gratification in the company of others – relationship always – the Trinity. Of course, Heaven is firstly a spiritual state. But I find absolutely fascinating the theology of the body and the way God elevates it. We believe in the Resurrection of all our bodies. We will have our bodies in Heaven - they will be divinized.

## Thursday 17<sup>th</sup>

The importance of the human body for God is shown by the incarnation and the fusion between God and matter in Christ.

We were thinking about Jesus' table fellowship, his everyday love of socialising and eating with others.

And it eventually leads us to the climax of the Last Supper when Jesus takes two of the most common foods and drink, bread and wine, and transforms them – mysteriously – into his own divine body and blood! Then, of course, he goes further by



sharing these with us: Almighty God giving himself to us literally in bread and wine. No wonder Malcolm Muggeridge said that if we could see the full reality of what we are receiving at communion we would crawl up the aisle on our hands and knees. But God makes it easy for us, he gives himself to us in the most every day way we could imagine, under the appearance of bread and wine.

## Friday 18<sup>th</sup>

What is it lovers sometimes say to one another, playfully? 'I love you so much I could eat you.'

And mothers, as well, to their babies.

Not literally, but you know what I mean. Consuming the other because we want to get even closer to them, if that were possible.

Humanly, of course, it isn't possible to get closer to someone we love by physically eating them! But eating, sexual love, eroticism, consumption, these are all human metaphors for the divine relationship and divine union God has planned for us. You see it in biblical poem The Song of Solomon.

St Paul takes it much further by talking about the mystical body of Christ. This is more than metaphor now and shows us just how precious, how valuable God regards our bodies: our union with Jesus and one another becomes so close that we are the cells within the one body, Jesus' body.



No wonder we are responsible for others if our union is that close. We can go even further still and say we are accountable for others.

## **Saturday 19<sup>th</sup>**

The mystical body of Christ – what an amazing reality that is – so deeply explored by St Paul. It points to how close we are to one another in Christ and to the divine goal, our union with God who is infinite love; but together, not isolated - one human family, each one helping the other as needed, yet retaining our uniqueness and complete freedom, our true selves liberated from sin and suffering.

This is beautifully expressed in a poem by Symeon the new theologian 1000 years ago.

It is another way to see the reality of our closeness here and now to Jesus and the importance of our bodies.

We awaken in Christ's body by Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022):

*We awaken in Christ's body  
as Christ awakens our bodies,  
and my poor hand is Christ, He enters  
my foot, and is infinitely me.*

*I move my hand, and wonderfully  
my hand becomes Christ, becomes all of Him*

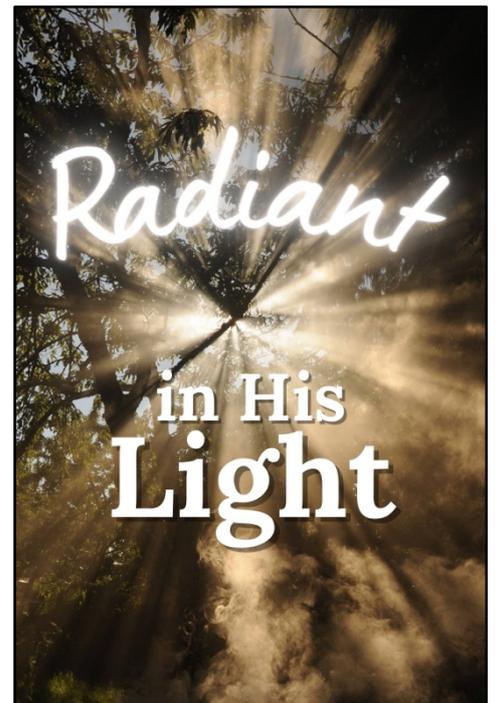
*I move my foot, and at once  
He appears like a flash of lightning.  
Do my words seem blasphemous? -- Then  
open your heart to Him*

*and let yourself receive the one  
who is opening to you so deeply.  
For if we genuinely love Him,  
we wake up inside Christ's body*

*where all our body, all over,  
every most hidden part of it,  
is realised in joy as Him,  
and He makes us, utterly, real,*

*and everything that is hurt, everything  
that seemed to us dark, harsh, shameful,  
maimed, ugly, irreparably  
damaged, is in Him transformed*

*and recognised as whole, as lovely,  
and radiant in His light  
he awakens as the Beloved  
in every last part of our body.*



## Sunday 20<sup>th</sup>

Our destiny is divine union – which in one sense is impossible because logically and rationally the gulf between us the finite and the infinite, God, is infinite. But love isn't logical nor rational! Certainly not divine love. So God finds a way. Each of us, a thimble of water poured into the infinity of God's ocean, yet retaining our purest individuality, our true self. And together in the mystical body of Christ utterly united in one body.

Heaven will come to us in its good time.

Meanwhile, the Kingdom of God is open to all of us right now, here on earth – 'it is between the now and the not yet,' as Richard Rohr puts it so perfectly.

Thank you, Lord, we are so blessed in having your kingdom. Help us to bring it to others.

*'May God heal all divisions - those within my own mind, heart, soul and body, and those between all people and groups - that we may be one Body in Christ, unified in every way and on every level, and thus manifest the Living Christ by our very lives. Amen.'* (Contemplative Outreach United in Prayer Day 2020)

