

Scrupulous ANONYMOUS

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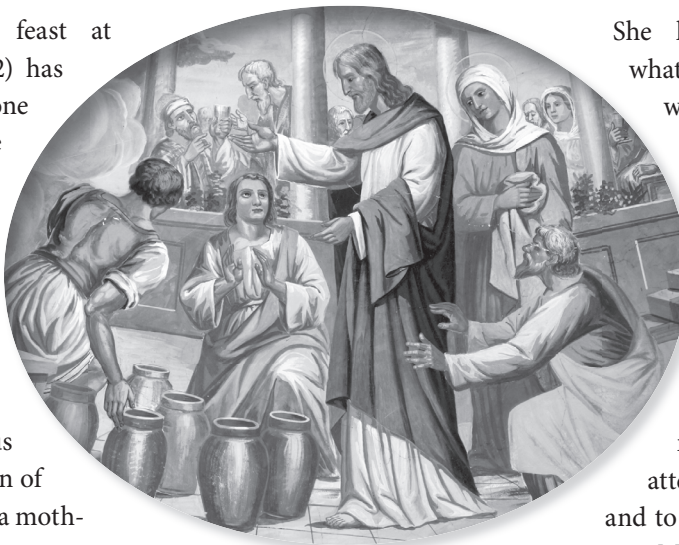


Scrupulous Anonymous
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Our Blessed Mother

The wedding feast at Cana (John 2) has always been one of my favorite Bible stories. Some biblical commentators suggest that this story should not be taken at face value, but I prefer not to get caught up in these details. I prefer to focus on the story's depiction of the intimacy between a mother and a son.

Our Blessed Lady knew her son would respond when she called on him. It's not the knowledge of his divinity that drives her, but rather her knowledge of Jesus as a person. Mary knew how Jesus would respond when she asked, because Mary knew her son. It was Mary who taught him what it meant to be human. It was at her knee that Jesus learned about respect, obedience, and love. And Mary understood that her son understood the meaning of love.



She knew he understood what it meant to be in need, what it meant to be potentially embarrassed. She was confident in her statement, "They have no wine." She was confident Jesus would respond in some way to lessen the hosts' embarrassment, to refocus the attention of the guests, and to do what was right and generous. Mary knew Jesus, and because she knew him, she was able to ask.

Remember to stay close

I grew up in very difficult circumstances. My father abandoned my two sisters and me when we were four, three, and two years old. My mother had understood her vocation to be that of wife and mother, but now she was confronted with the knowledge that she would not realize her dreams: She would be mother, but she would not be wife.

Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSSR

My father's leaving greatly affected my two sisters and me, but some of the consequences affected my mother even more profoundly.

I remember all of that, but mostly I remember feeling loved. I knew that every decision my mother made, no matter how difficult, she made because it was best for her children. Again and again she chose her children—our lives and our dreams—and put her own life and dreams on the back burner.

One day I heard my mother crying. I heard sounds coming from behind the basement door. When I discovered my mother on the basement steps crying, I wasn't sure what to do. Children don't expect to see their parents express pain. Nevertheless, here I was face to face with my mother in tears. She wasn't crying about her smashed dreams. She wasn't crying about her needs or desires. She was crying about her children, thinking somehow she had failed us that day, that she was not the person she should be. Her tears had nothing to do with her, but they had everything to do with her children.

Many times when I would leave the house to go back to the seminary or when I was on the phone with my mother, she would say, "Remember to stay close to the Blessed Mother." At first I wrote it off as an expression of her strong and constant devotion to Mary. Now, however, I'm not so sure it means only that.

Perhaps it was a reminder of our mother-son relationship. Perhaps it was a reminder of the struggle of growing up. Perhaps it was a reminder that many people—despite their best intentions and their own

devotion—don't end up with the lives they wanted. Instead, they're presented with another choice, another path, and it is in this path that they discover their vocation and the experience of the kingdom of God. And perhaps it was a reminder to be gentle and accepting, patient and kind.

Remember Our Blessed Mother

I think of all of this when I hear the story of the wedding feast of Cana. Let the biblical scholars tell us what it means and what it symbolizes. I prefer to think of the story as an expression of the intimacy between mother and son. Who knows what Jesus remembered, who knows what Jesus felt, who knows what memory stirred deep within him when his mother told him, "They have no wine."

We celebrate the great feast of Our Mother of Perpetual Help on Monday, June 27. Our Blessed

Mother is remembered and celebrated under this title by people throughout the world, but she is remembered and celebrated in a special way by Redemptorists and the members of the extended Redemptorist family.

It is my prayer that each member of the SA family be blessed in a special way during this month of June. In the words the priest prays during the novena to Our Mother of Perpetual Help, "May the Lord Jesus Christ be with you

that he may defend you, within you that he may sustain you, before you that he may lead you, behind you that he may protect you, above you that he may bless you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."



TO LIVE, TO LOVE, TO GROW

The following is adapted from *A Presence That Disturbs: A Call to Radical Discipleship* by Anthony J. Gittins (Liguori Publications © 2002).

To live, you must choose. Some people seem to let life happen to them, at best reacting to the daily round rather than taking initiative. The Jewish-Christian tradition has always set great store by the human capacity for choice: We not only need to react, we can choose to act and even choose to accept or reject some of the things that come our way. In the book of the Law, we read of God setting life and prosperity, death and doom, before the people, and urging them to choose wisely: "Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

To love, you must encounter. Some people know about many things and many people. They claim to know about the people of Africa or South America, about the poor, or about those in prison. Such knowledge is legitimate, intellectual knowledge, or what we call general knowledge; but other people actually know people from Africa or South America, actually know poor people or people in prison. This is empirical or experiential knowledge. We

cannot truly know, much less love, in the abstract.

To grow, you must suffer. At first blush this sounds perverse, yet suffering is an essential component of human development. When we encounter suffering that we are unable to remove, we can either turn in on ourselves and become overwhelmed by it, or we can attempt to turn ourselves and our suffering inside out. In this way, suffering can help us grow. Then it can become redemptive. We may have visited a friend who was in the terminal stages of illness and come away unexpectedly elevated and encouraged rather than dispirited and discouraged. This type of experience confirms that suffering, nobly borne and not used to evoke sympathy, is one of the strongest faces of the human spirit. Appropriate acceptance of what we cannot change is not only enriching for the sufferer but is a gift of dignity, integrity, and hope to the wider community. Paradoxically, suffering accepted in this way can be life-giving for many.



O Blessed Virgin Mary, you are the Mother and Queen of every Christian family.

As a woman of faith, you inspire all mothers to transmit faith to their children.

Watch over our families. Let the children learn free and loving obedience inspired by your obedience to God. Let parents learn dedication and selflessness based on your unselfish attitude. Let all families honor you and remain devoted to you. Amen.

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SCRUPULOUS ANONYMOUS MAILBOX

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Q *Father, you are a lukewarm Catholic who does not accurately teach the laws of the Church. You said a woman could attend her granddaughter's wedding on a beach. Our diocesan newspaper recently stated that marriages take place only in church—no exceptions. Remove me from your mailing list.*

A You are somewhat correct. Catholic weddings are usually celebrated in a church, but the bishop can allow other venues according to circumstance.

I did not misrepresent Catholic teaching in my answer to the grandmother. She asked whether she could attend a *non-Catholic* wedding in a nontraditional setting without fear of sin or scandal. I answered yes. I stand by my answer. It is not being lukewarm in my Catholic belief or practices. It is the correct pastoral application of ministerial service in a specific situation.

Q *Thank you so much for the help and guidance you've given me over the years. I'm a long-time reader of the SA newsletter, and I find something of value in each issue. I do, however, miss the "this helped me" issues. It was always good to hear from other readers.*

A Thank you for your kind and encouraging words. I appreciate them very much and know that you speak for many readers of the SA newsletter. I also agree with your suggestion to schedule an issue of suggestions our readers find helpful in dealing with their own scrupulosity. Sometimes a suggestion that might seem inconsequential in the larger scheme of things proves invaluable to someone. I will schedule such an issue in the months ahead.

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