

First Sunday After the Nativity – Fill Us Up

Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian
St. Sarkis Armenian Church. Carrollton, TX
January 15, 2017
Gospel Reading: John 2:1-11

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today's Gospel reading is a familiar one, telling us about the Wedding in Cana of Galilee, when Christ turned water into wine. This is when Christ, His mother and all the disciples were invited to a wedding and on the third day the wine ran out. Mary approached Jesus and after a brief interaction, Jesus tells the servants to fill the six large jars up with water. After they have done that, He then told them to take some water (which had been changed to wine) to the head of the table and when the master of the banquet had tasted the wine (changed from water) he exclaimed how delicious it was. The Gospel then says that Christ's glory was revealed and His disciples believed in Him.

Probably the most important word or command in this story is "fill". We hear this word often in our everyday lives because we fill many things. We fill cars with gasoline and when we visit someone's home, the host fills out plates with food. Especially during New Year's celebrations with Armenians, we fill up our glasses with vodka, cognac and wine. We are constantly filling things up. We also use the word when referring to people, saying, "He is full of life" or "He is full of stories".

But what do we fill our lives with? What occupies us? Very often we fill our lives and minds with worries, stress, greed, pride and gossip when we should be occupied with seeking the Kingdom of Heaven and mending our relationship with God. In today's Gospel reading, the newlyweds invited Christ to be part of their celebrations and their wedding feast became a foretaste of the Kingdom of Heaven. Through the intercession of the Holy Mother of God, their needs were taken care of and they were filled with relief.

So often our world is filled with worries and stress that we put God and our relationship with Him 17th or 18th on our list of things to do. We get distracted and forget. This is why the Divine Liturgy used to end when the priest descended from the altar and said a special prayer. Today, we have added things to the end of the Liturgy, but original final prayer was, *"Let it be. Let it be. Let it be. You are the perfection of the Law and of the prophets, O Christ God our Savior, who did fulfill all your economies willed by the Father; fill us also with Your Holy Spirit. Amen."* We see that the very final request we make during the Divine Liturgy

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and right before we leave the sanctuary is to “fill us also with Your Holy Spirit.” As if it is also a reminder to each of us to allow the Holy Spirit to fill us in the coming week.

However, in order to fill something, we need to remove the cover. This became very apparent in my life when I moved from New Jersey to Florida. Growing up and driving in New Jersey all my life, I became very accustomed to full service gas stations. There are no self-serve gas stations in New Jersey, so when I moved to Florida, I did not know how to fill up a tank of gas. I stood there, looking at the cap of the gas tank, trying to figure out how to open it and how to fill it. Thankfully, a passerby realized I needed help and showed me, but if I had not learned how to remove the cap, I probably still would be in Florida.

We too must remove our barriers and walls, allowing the Holy Spirit to fill us. The greatest and most effective way is through prayer: private prayer in particular. We rush through our everyday activities and forget to interact with God. What we need to do is be still for a minimum of thirty seconds every morning to center ourselves and listen to God’s voice in our lives. Being still is one of the most difficult acts a Christian can do in today’s world, but being still and silent allows the Holy Spirit to reside in us and He will chase out the worries, fears and stresses that constantly bombard us.

So let us strive to remove distractions from our lives by praying and being still and silent every day for only thirty seconds, listening to God’s voice and allowing the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. When we do this, we will see the great changes in our lives, the peace which comes from the Holy Spirit and the same joy which the wedding guests felt at the wedding in Cana of Galilee.

Amen.