

WHO IS AFRAID OF THE NEW?

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Whether one is an ordinary wine-drinker or a wine-connoisseur, one knows that the older the vintage is, the better the taste. Hence, the truth of the concluding statement in today's Gospel reading: "The old is good."

But while this is true of gustatory taste, this does not apply to the reality of God's kingdom or God's working with human beings, described by the imagery of wine.

Among peoples of the Near East, wine—like grain and oil—was a necessity rather than luxury. For the Biblical writers, wine was a covenant blessing given by God, evoking joy, celebration and festivity. To the Israelites who remained faithful to God, the Lord promised an abundance of wine.

There was, of course, old wine and new wine. But as the Bible uses the imagery, the old is not better than the new; it is rather the opposite. The "new" is not simply the displacement of the old; it is something that perfects and completes the old. And the key to understanding the image of newness is the awareness that God is the God of new beginnings who is continuously "doing a new thing" (Is 43:19).

Among God's new actions, the foremost is the making of the "new covenant" (cf. Jer 31:31). This motif of newness of covenant or God's relationship with his people reverberates most intensely in the New Testament where Jesus is presented as its mediator and

agent. The teachings of Jesus are expressions of the new covenant which Jesus establishes at the Last Supper and seals with his blood on the cross.

In the Gospel, Jesus refers to old wineskins, containers of the old wine. We can surmise that these are containers of the "old wine," of God's favors to Israel, which St. Paul enumerates as follows: the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the promises, the patriarchs—even the Messiah according to the flesh (Rom 9:4-5). The scribes and the Pharisees hold that these favors (wine) are safeguarded and made available in the "wineskins" of their traditions and practices like circumcision; keeping the Sabbath; keeping Israel free of contamination from tax collectors, sinners, and Gentiles—and practising fasting and prayers. In the Gospel, these religious leaders reprove Jesus for not being zealous as they are in observing the last.

Jesus declares that he is introducing "new wine"—a new way of bringing in God's favor for the people, a new way of worshipping and giving honor to God. He is the Messiah who fulfills Isaiah's prophecy: "See, the earlier things have come to pass, new things I now foretell" (Is 42:9). He proclaims his Gospel that announces a "new and living way" to God. As the Messiah, he ushers in the superabundance of God's blessing so that his presence calls for the joy of the wedding feast,

not the sorrow of fasting. As the new Moses, his teachings surpass those of Israel's greatest lawgiver. Jesus teaches that the kingdom heaven is open even to sinners like the tax-collector Levi (Lk 5:27-32, the episode preceding today's episode). He also teaches that the Sabbath rest is not absolute; it is for the good of man.

Jesus does not do away with the traditional practices of Israel, but to receive his teaching, people like the scribes and Pharisees must have "fresh wineskins," that is, a fresh perspective about the ways of God's dealing with human beings through Jesus. But these religious leaders find "the old good"; they are comfortable with their theology and traditions. They find the "new" untried, unsure and dangerous. They don't even trust Jesus; they don't believe that he is a prophet from God. For them Jesus is a disturber of Israel.

Christians, too, are not spared of fear of something new. When one feels comfortable with the old, why change? Why speak of *aggiornamento* or updating in the Church that Vatican Council II introduced? Why change old but comfortable ideas about the Church?

When John Paul II inaugurated his pastoral ministry as Pope, he invited God's people: "Do not be afraid... Open wide the doors to Christ!" Not to welcome new things is to condemn oneself to being mummified, to be irrelevant. It betrays the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the living Lord, and the Holy Spirit who does not cease to guide the People of God.

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon

(Cf. Ps 85: 3, 5)

(Recited when there is no opening song.)

Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I cry to you all the day long. O LORD, you are good and forgiving, full of mercy to all who call to you.

Greeting

(The sign of the cross is made here.)

P—Blessed be the Lord Jesus, the bridegroom who welcomes us to his banquet. May his gift of salvation be with you all.

All—And with your spirit.

Introduction

(These [or similar words] may be used to address the assembly.)

P—In today's Gospel, Jesus alludes to himself as the groom whose presence among the people brings the joy of messianic banquet. It is but proper, therefore, that the disciples focus on joy instead of sorrow and penance symbolized by fasting. Despite the problems and anxieties of daily life, let us hold on to Easter joy which overcomes all sorrows.

Penitential Act

P—Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.
(Pause)

All—I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

P—May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.
All—Amen.

P—Lord, have mercy.
All—Lord, have mercy.

P—Christ, have mercy.
All—Christ, have mercy.

P—Lord, have mercy.
All—Lord, have mercy.

Collect

P—Let us pray. *(Pause)*

God of might, giver of every good gift, put into our hearts the love of your name, so that, by deepening our sense of reverence, you may nurture in us what is good and, by your watchful care, keep safe what you have nurtured.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

All—Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD



First Reading (Col 1:15-20) *(Sit)*

In the light of the resurrection, the divinity of Jesus is fully revealed. The functions of Christ, as presented by the Apostle Paul, have been part of the creed of the early Christians.

A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Colossians

BROTHER AND SISTERS: Christ Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him.

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the Body, the Church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the Blood of his cross through him, whether those on earth or those in heaven.

—The word of the Lord.
All—Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 100)

R—Come with joy into the presence of the Lord.

1. Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you land;/ serve the LORD with gladness;/ come before him with joyful song. **(R)**

2. Know that the LORD is God;/ he made us, his we are;/ his people, the flock he tends. **(R)**

3. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, /his courts with praise;/ give thanks to him; bless his name. **(R)**

4. For he is good, /the LORD, whose, kindness, endures forever, / and his faithfulness, to all generations. **(R)**

Alleluia (Jn 8:12) *(Stand)*

All—Alleluia, alleluia. I am the light of the world, says the Lord; whoever follows me will have the light of life. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Lk 5:33-39)

P—A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke
All—Glory to you, O Lord.

THE SCRIBES and the Pharisees said to Jesus, "The disciples of John the Baptist fast often and offer prayers, and the disciples of the Pharisees do the same; but yours eat and drink."

Jesus answered them, "Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days."

And he also told them a parable. "No one tears a piece from a new cloak to patch an old one. Otherwise, he will tear the new and the piece from it will not match the old cloak. Likewise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled, and the skins will be ruined. Rather, new wine must be poured into fresh wineskins.

And no one who has been drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.' "

—The Gospel of the Lord.

All—Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (Sit)

Prayer of the Faithful

P—The Lord compares the joy of the Kingdom to the joy of the wedding guests. In moments of sorrow and distress, let us draw courage from Easter joy that no one can take away from us.

R—Lord, hear us.

C—May the joy of Christ shine on the faces of the faithful attending the wedding banquet rather than bearing the sadness of those coming from the funeral wake. We pray: **(R)**

C—May the grief of people who endure great suffering slowly give way to a quiet yet firm trust in the Lord. We pray: **(R)**

C—May we have a new heart and new mentality to contain the freshness of the novelty of the Gospel message. We pray: **(R)**

C—May consecrated men and women who live their "spousal love" of Jesus the Bridegroom through their vows witness to the joy in having found the pearl of great prize. We pray: **(R)**

C—May our departed brothers and sisters sit at the banquet of heaven that the Lord has prepared for his faithful ones. We pray: **(R)**

P—Loving Father, may our fasting and deprivations not lead to unhappiness, but to the joy of sharing in Jesus' redemptive mission, so that we may someday sit at table in your Kingdom. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All—Amen.

LITURGY OF
THE EUCHARIST



Presentation of the Gifts
(Stand)

P—Pray, brethren...

All—May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name,

for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P—May this sacred offering, O Lord, confer on us always the blessing of salvation, that what it celebrates in mystery it may accomplish in power.

Through Christ our Lord.

All—Amen.

Preface (The Boundless Charity of Christ)

P—The Lord be with you.

All—And with your spirit.

P—Lift up your hearts.

All—We lift them up to the Lord.

P—Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All—It is right and just.

P—It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

For raised up high on the Cross, he gave himself up for us with a wonderful love and poured out blood and water from his pierced side, the wellspring of the Church's Sacraments, so that, won over to the open heart of the Savior, all might draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.

And so, with all the Angels and Saints, we praise you, as without end we acclaim:

All—Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. (Kneel)

Acclamation (Stand)

All—We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer

All—Our Father...

P—Deliver us, Lord...

All—For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.

Invitation to Peace

Invitation to Communion

(Kneel)

P—Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

All—Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon

(Ps 31 (30): 20)

How great is the goodness, Lord, that you keep for those who fear you.

Prayer after Communion

(Stand)

P—Let us pray. *(Pause)*

Renewed by this bread from the heavenly table, we beseech you, Lord, that, being the food of charity, it may confirm our hearts and stir us to serve you in our neighbor.

Through Christ our Lord.

All—Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P—The Lord be with you.

All—And with your spirit.

Prayer over the people

P—Bow down for the blessing. *(Pause)*

May the God of all consolation order your days in his peace and grant you the gifts of his blessing.

All—Amen.

P—May he free you always from every distress and confirm your hearts in his love.

All—Amen.

P—So that on this life's journey you may be effective in good works, rich in the gifts of hope, faith and charity, and may come happily to eternal life.

All—Amen.

P—And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.

All—Amen.

Dismissal

P—Go forth, the Mass is ended.

All—Thanks be to God.



PRAYER TO THE SACRED HEART *of Jesus*

Divine Jesus, you have said, "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," behold me kneeling at your feet, filled with a lively faith and confidence in the promises dictated by your Sacred Heart and pronounced by Your adorable lips. I come to ask this favor: *(Here silently mention your petitions).*

To whom can I turn if not to you whose Heart is the source of all graces and merits? Where should I seek if not in the treasure which contains all the riches of your kindness and mercy? Where should I knock if not at the door through which God gives himself to us and through which we go to God? I have recourse to You, Heart of Jesus. In you I find consolation when afflicted,

protection when persecuted, strength when burdened with trials, and light in doubt and darkness.

Dear Jesus, I firmly believe that you can grant me the grace I implore, even though it should require a miracle. You have only to will it, and my prayer will be granted. I admit that I am most unworthy of your favors, but this is not a reason for me to be discouraged. You are the God of Mercy and you will not refuse a contrite heart. Cast upon me a look of mercy, I beg of you, and your kind Heart will find in my miseries and weaknesses a reason for granting my prayers.

O Sacred Heart, whatever may be your decision with regard to my request, I will never stop adoring, loving, praising and serving you. My Lord Jesus, be pleased to accept this my act of perfect resignation to the decrees of your adorable Heart which I sincerely desire may be fulfilled by me and all your creatures forever.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I know that there is but one thing impossible to you: to be without pity to those who are suffering or in distress. Look upon me, I beg of you, dear Jesus, and grant me the grace for which I humbly implore you through the Immaculate Heart of your most sorrowful Mother. You have entrusted me to her as her child, and her prayers are all-powerful with you. Amen.

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