

Overflowing

Love



SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

CYCLE C

Isaiah 62: 1-5
1 Corinthians 12: 4-11
John 2: 1-11

GATHERING

(An unlit candle, an open wedding album and a bottle of champagne rest on a table covered with a white cloth.)

This week we reflect on God's deep, intimate, joyful love for us. We have celebrated the Feast of Epiphany. The magi were seeking the truth behind the sign of the star. How did you seek and respond to the truth this past week?
(Members share briefly.)

OPENING PRAYER

(A reflective instrumental selection plays as the candle is lit and the leader invites the group to take a few minutes of silent reflection on being in God's presence. Following the music and some additional time of quiet, the community prays as follows.)

All: Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Leader: Sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all you lands.
Sing to the LORD; bless his name.

All: Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Leader: Announce his salvation, day after day.
Tell his glory among the nations;
among all peoples, his wondrous deeds.

All: Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Leader: Give to the LORD, you families of nations,
give to the LORD glory and praise;
give to the LORD the glory due his name!

All: Proclaim his marvelous deeds to all the nations.

Psalm 96: 1-2, 2-3, 7-8

Focus Question

Recall a joyful celebration.

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the gospel reading, the facilitator invites members to mention a word, a phrase or an image from one of the readings that particularly struck them this week. Members then read over the commentary and consider the questions in silence for several minutes before entering into conversation.)

Commentary

Some of our happiest memories are of weddings. The beautiful ceremony celebrates the precious commitment of a loving relationship. And the reception is filled with singing and dancing, eating and drinking, and wonderful stories with plenty of laughter. This beautiful imagery also describes God's relationship with us.

Jesus revealed this celebratory relationship with God at the wedding feast of Cana. The old wine running out was symbolic of the end of an old tradition. Jews expressed their relationship with God in terms of the practice of the purity codes

found in the Book of Leviticus. When someone became impure, a sacrificial offering was made to regain that person's purity in God's eyes. The water jars were used in the ceremonial washing that was a part of this sacrificial way of life. Jesus used these ceremonial water jars and turned the water into new wine. This wine was not like the old wine. It was a much better quality. The new wine represents the joyful, intimate celebration of God's love for his people. The amount of wine was also symbolic. Jesus used six jars each holding twenty to thirty gallons of water. That's 150 gallons of wine for the guests. God's love for us is overflowing in its abundance.

We've been invited to a never ending wedding feast. But often we feel like we don't deserve such joy. We think that God knows who we really are, and knows that we really don't belong. But just as God's forgiveness led to a new beginning for Jerusalem, God is constantly reconciling with us today. God's forgiveness and love are overflowing. This abundant love is for all of humanity. Paul explains to the Corinthians that God is working in everyone, and we are all united in God's love. We witness to God's abundant love by sharing our gifts generously and by acknowledging the rich gifts of others.

It is impossible for us to sustain the joyfulness of a wedding feast constantly. There are certainly down times, and even dark times. But God's love is constant. And God is always calling us back to a deep, intimate love that is binding and permanent, fruitful and full of joy.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ How does the word, phrase or image that struck you from this week's scriptures speak to your life or the life of the community, your family or your world these days?
- ◆ What elements make for a joyful celebration?
- ◆ What do you like most about celebrations?
- ◆ How do you celebrate God's love for you?
- ◆ What might prevent you from celebrating God's love for you?
- ◆ What abundant gift has God given you? How do you share it?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

(The leader poses the question, "What does God ask of you/us in light of our sharing of life and faith this week?" After a few minutes of reflection, the leader invites conversation in response to the question.)

- ◆ Surprise family and/or friends some day with a particularly bounteous meal complete with wine. Read this week's gospel at the beginning of the meal. Invite those at table to raise their glasses and toast Jesus' new wine and overflowing love of God.
- ◆ Take 20 minutes some day this week for reflection and prayer. Consider the gifts that God has given to you to bring about some change in your corner of the world. Make some change that promotes God's truth

CLOSING PRAYER AND SENDING FORTH

Some reflective instrumental music plays after which a member prays as follows on behalf of all.

Beloved, to Thee I raise my whole being,
a vessel emptied of self. Accept, O Lord,
this my emptiness, and so fill me with
Thy Self — Thy Light, Thy Love, Thy
Life — that these Thy precious Gifts
may radiate through me and over-
flow the chalice of my heart into
the hearts of all with whom I
come in contact this day,
revealing unto them
the beauty of
Thy joy
and
Wholeness
and
the
serenity
of Thy Peace
which nothing can destroy.

Excerpted from **The World Prayers Project**, *Prayer of the Chalice*,
Francis Nuttall, www.worldprayers.org, © 1999-2005.

(The session concludes with a glass of champagne or some other sparkling beverage.)