



WATER INTO WINE

A Marriage Sermon for all interchurch couples

There was a wedding in Manchester. The mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and members of his Church were guests also.

Yes, like that unknown couple at Cana in Galilee nearly 2000 years ago, Naomi and James have invited Jesus as a guest to their wedding. He is here to share in our joy as Naomi and James give themselves to each other in marriage.

Our celebrations are under way. Led by Naomi and James we have renewed our baptismal vows with joy and enthusiasm, for we are all Jesus' disciples and we all rejoice in this. Our celebrations have got off to a good start. We are all one in Christ.

But, calamity upon calamity, the wine has given out. We don't all belong to the same Christian tradition – some of us are Roman Catholic, some Anglican, some Methodist and some are from other Christian traditions. We cannot share the wine of the Eucharist.

At Cana Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine left." Everyone shared her concern and so do we. But Jesus answered, "Your concern, mother, is not mine. My hour has not yet come." What was he meaning? Was he saying that it was their own fault for not preparing enough and that they were not ready to hear him yet? What is he saying to us in our predicament of finding that we have no wine, that we find ourselves belonging to different Christian traditions? Is he saying that we have created these traditions and that we don't seem ready to hear him yet?

But his mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Jesus tells them to fill up the stone jars. used for the rites of purification, with water. They must have been nearly empty after washing the feet of all those guests. It seems that today, having recalled our own washing in the waters of Baptism, our water jars are getting low — we are empty vessels.

"Fill them," says Jesus. Fill them to the brim with all the treasures of your own Christian tradition, with all the Christian experience you have had in your lives, with all the suffering you feel as a result of your separation. Fill them to the brim at Jesus' command — do not leave anything of your baptismal experience out.

Only when we have done this will we be able to draw out at Jesus' command, and taste the water turned into wine. Then will our shared baptismal experience be turned into a shared eucharistic experience and we will realise that we have left the best wine to last.

Naomi and James, as you make your marriage vows to each other, do whatever Jesus tells you. Those water jars stand empty. At our Lord's command fill them with all your Christian experience.

You each have a rich experience in your families, in your churches, in your Christian upbringing. Pour all that into those water jars.

Pour in the joy of Christian study, of Christian friends, and of Christian caring. Pour in the fruits of your Christian devotion, of your bible reading, and of your prayer. Pour in everything, both of you, of your own individual Christian experience.

Fill those jars to the brim. Then in your home, in your family life, in your work, whenever you draw out from those jars, you will taste the new wine that Jesus has prepared for you.

Don't be bound by tradition, that is the old wine which seems to taste good until the new wine prepared for us by Jesus is tasted. You have invited Jesus to your wedding and he is here with us. He will go with you through your married life.

All of us who are here today give you this Bible. In these pages you will find Jesus, through them he will speak to you and guide you.

But take particular notice of the advice that Mary gave to the servants at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, for she gives that same advice to you both: *"Do whatever HE tells you."*