

## ① **【Quietly awaiting the divine hour】**

There was a wedding in Cana, and Jesus and his disciples were invited to the banquet. Wedding feasts at that time lasted seven days. During the banquet, the wine ran out. Mary, his mother, approached Jesus and said, "They have no wine." Mary was concerned about the wine because this wedding feast was for her relatives, and she was responsible for the hospitality. Jesus replied, "Woman, what concern is that to you and me? My hour has not yet come" (verse 4). 'Woman' may sound cold, but in the language of the time, it meant something like "Mother." "What concern is that to you and me?" means "What connection do you have with me?" My time has not yet come" (verse 4). 'Woman' might sound cold, but in the language of the time, it meant something like "Mother." "What concern is that to you and me?" means "Whatever you think, I have my own thoughts." What does "My time has not yet come" mean? The word "time" appears many times in the Bible. A famous example is, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). In Gethsemane, Jesus said, "It is enough. The hour has come" (Mark 14:41). While this refers to the moment of His death on the cross, it can be understood as the time when God reveals His glorious form and power. We often wish our needs would be met immediately, but God has His appointed time, and we must wait for that time.

● At the Heartwarming Gathering, we are currently learning about social withdrawal. Last time, we learned about "waiting." It is said that humans possess self-healing abilities, which vary from person to person, so it is important to believe in this and wait. But humans find it difficult to wait. Henri Nouwen lists three things necessary for waiting: ① Believing that something has already begun. ② Letting go of one's own desires and holding onto hope. ③ Trust, not trying to manipulate your future. Waiting is profoundly religious. To those who cannot believe in the future, I say: "Even if you cannot trust what comes from people, trust what God has created, what God has done." Those who do not pray become confused by immediate circumstances and lose faith. Their eyes are always fixed on the earth, not on God. We need to see people and things through God's eyes.

Mary was a woman who could wait for God's timing. She called the servants and said, "Whatever he tells you, do it" (verse 5). She did not send them to buy wine, nor did she consult the steward of the feast. Instead, she entrusted this matter to Jesus and waited.

## ② **【Human labor and divine work complete all things】**

There were six stone water jars in the banquet hall, used by the Jews for

purification. Each jar held 80 to 120 liters. Jesus told the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” So they filled them to the brim. If each jar held the equivalent of a 2-liter plastic bottle, that would be 40 to 60 bottles per jar. Since there were six jars, that would be 240 to 360 bottles. Since they had to draw water from a well, not a tap, they would have to make many trips back and forth. It was extremely hard labor. Why did Jesus command the servants to do this?

●Father Demetrius says, “The world is not merely a gift from God, but a task entrusted to humanity.”

We humans have inherited the power to create, one of God's attributes. What we offer during the Eucharist is not wheat, but bread shaped by human hands. We do not offer grapes, but wine transformed by human labor and skill. This signifies that all creation, including humanity itself, is perfected through human labor. The six water jars symbolize the world created over six days. This signifies that humanity was meant to perfect this world by working upon it and reshaping it. The same holds true for humanity itself. Though created in God's image, this did not mean humanity was perfect from the start; rather, we were programmed to grow toward perfection. Only by growing into the likeness of God (Christ) are we perfected. That is why labor was given to humanity from the very beginning in the Garden of Eden. “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” (Genesis 2:15) We must labor on ourselves until we die. That is why we have the labor of life and the monastic life. Human labor is added to the water created by God, and then, through God's work, it is transformed into the best possible thing. Especially in the life of faith, repeating the same actions, the same prayers, at the same time is extremely effective.

●In the 19th century, there was a man named Father Ioann of Kronstadt. He entered school at age ten but could barely read. Yet he prayed to God, gained the ability to read, received the power to understand difficult things, and graduated at the top of his class. He became famous for performing many miracles, but the source of his strength was “the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours.” He spoke of prayer thus: “For a priest, the repetition of prayers, beginning with the Lord's Prayer, is a duty. For the strengthening of the soul lies not in the variety of prayers, but in the repetition of the same prayer, which allows it to take root in our hearts, our will, and all aspects of our lives.”

Continuing to pray, continuing to evangelize, continuing to preach and speak—it's like drawing water. Even if you send out the weekly bulletin, it might be discarded unread. Sometimes, preaching feels like striking the air, as if nothing sinks in. At times, you might wonder if it's all in vain, but continuing is what matters.

●In Nara, there is a famous temple called Yakushiji. During the Second Shikoku Typhoon, the temple suffered severe damage. The ridgepole of the lecture hall

snapped, a thousand tiles flew off the main hall built during the Toyotomi era, and five hundred tiles flew off the East Hall built during the Kamakura period. However, the oldest structure, the three-story pagoda built during the Tenpyō era, remained completely undamaged. Why? Entering the attic space of the pagoda revealed the reason: it was built using an immense amount of timber, so much that one could barely move inside. It's said the quantity of wood used would be enough to build three pagodas by today's standards. It was precisely because such time and effort were invested in the unseen parts that the pagoda remained unshaken even by the typhoon. Takada Yoshitane of Yakushiji Temple said, "The three-story pagoda taught me that even to achieve the smallest effect, one must spare no effort."

We too wish to follow the example of the boy who drew this water.

### ③ **【Good things come later】**

Jesus said, "Now draw some out and take it to the steward of the feast" (2:8). So the servants took it to the steward. The steward tasted the water that had been turned into wine. The Bible does not record when or how the water turned into wine. What is not written need not be pondered. What matters is that God performs marvelous works in ways unknown to us, without our awareness. The steward called the bridegroom and said, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when the guests have drunk freely, then the inferior. But you have kept the good wine until now." (verse 10) When drunk, one's senses are numb, so it makes no difference what they drink. Therefore, it is customary to serve the good wine first and the inferior wine after the guests are drunk. Yet the steward said, "You have saved the best until now. You are truly remarkable." This is prophecy spoken through the steward's mouth. The words "You have saved the best until now" represent the Gospel of Christ.

Many misunderstand this world. They believe the good things are given first, gradually diminish, and by life's end, everything is lost. But it's the exact opposite. The very best is given last. Christ, who is God, has reserved the good things in heaven to be provided after human labor ends. This good thing is called "eternal life, the likeness of Christ, and imperishable heavenly treasures." This is what the Bible consistently teaches.

Recently, someone asked me, "What does it mean to bear fruit? If I grow old and become selfish, won't I be unable to bear fruit like Christ?" Hearing this, I thought, "That's certainly true." However, now is the time for labor, not the time for reward. The wage of eternal life is paid after the labor of this world is finished. Even if we cannot bear fruit like Christ in this world, I believe we will bear it in the next. In this world, I think we should simply strive to be like Christ as much as possible. Let us continue to work on this body, looking forward to inheriting wonderful fruit in the next life as we live out this present one.