

Year C
Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
(Is 62:1-5; Ps 96; 1 Cor 12:4-11; Jn 2:1-11)

Last week we had occasion to refer to Gen 49:9-10, the “oracle of Judah” in which Jacob blesses his twelve sons. Judah is the head of the messianic tribe from whence will come the king of Israel, the messiah of the End time. This will be a time when nature will be marvelously abundant: one can tie one’s donkey to the vine without fear that it will eat up all the grapes, for there will be so many grapes one can wash one’s clothes in wine! Jesus’ first sign (or miracle) in John’s gospel unites the eschatological themes of abundant wine and wedding; in the End time (“eschatology”), it will be a feast, a wedding feast, with new wine (see Mk 2:18-22).

The first reading is from the last part of Isaiah, in which the prophet proclaims the salvation of God’s city, Jerusalem. She had indeed been trod under by the pagans, when God’s people had been punished for their infidelities, but there had never been a divorce between Yahweh and Israel (Is 54). The image of the abandoned wife was powerful in the ancient Near East; the prophet proclaims that God’s union with his renewed and vindicated people will be like the marriage of a young man with a virgin; it will be a new, wonderful start, which calls for a “new song,” Ps 96.

Biblical symbolism is rich in the Fourth Gospel. Jesus is the New Adam, who struggled in a garden to do God’s will, successfully, not like the first Adam (cf. Gen 3; Jn 12:24-33; 18:1; 20:15). Mary likewise is the new “Woman,” the new Eve (“Mother of all the living”), who shows herself obedient to God’s eschatological plan in Jesus, and in fact thus unleashes the events of the End time (Jn 2:5); Jesus thus manifests his glory for the first time, Jn 2:11. And this Woman will likewise be next to that very different Tree of Life at Calvary, when the New Adam gives birth to the Church of which Mary is Mother, and which also comes from his side, Jn 19:34.