

Message

September 8, 2024

Dear Sisters,

*O, that the soul of Mary were in us to glorify the Lord!
That the spirit of Mary were in us to rejoice in God!
That the eyes of Mary were in us to see our neighbors as she sees them!*

As we celebrate the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we are invited to contemplate on her life and follow it as a luminous example of what it means to walk in the light of divine grace, even in the face of uncertainty and challenges.

In a homily delivered on August 5 at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome, Pope Francis referred to Our Lady as the mediatrix of grace: “The faithful come to ask the Holy Mother of God for a blessing, for she is the mediatrix of the grace that always and only flows through Jesus Christ, by the action of the Holy Spirit.” He also noted that during the forthcoming Holy Year of the Jubilee, many pilgrims will visit the Basilica to seek for our Blessed Lady’s blessing. Similarly, as we prepare for our 49th General Chapter, we too confidently approach our Lady and ask for her blessings.

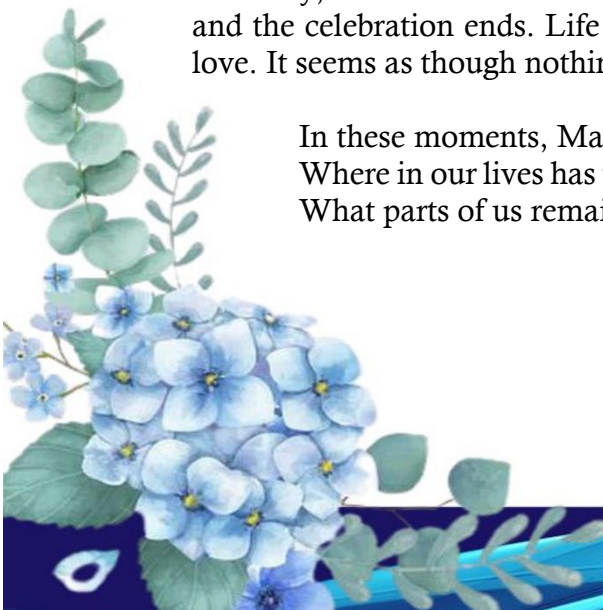
For our reflection on the occasion of her feastday, I would like to draw attention to the words Mary spoke in St. John’s account of the wedding at Cana. This story is rich in detail and meaning, and Mary’s words invite us to enter into the depths of her heart, allowing us to understand the significance behind her actions.

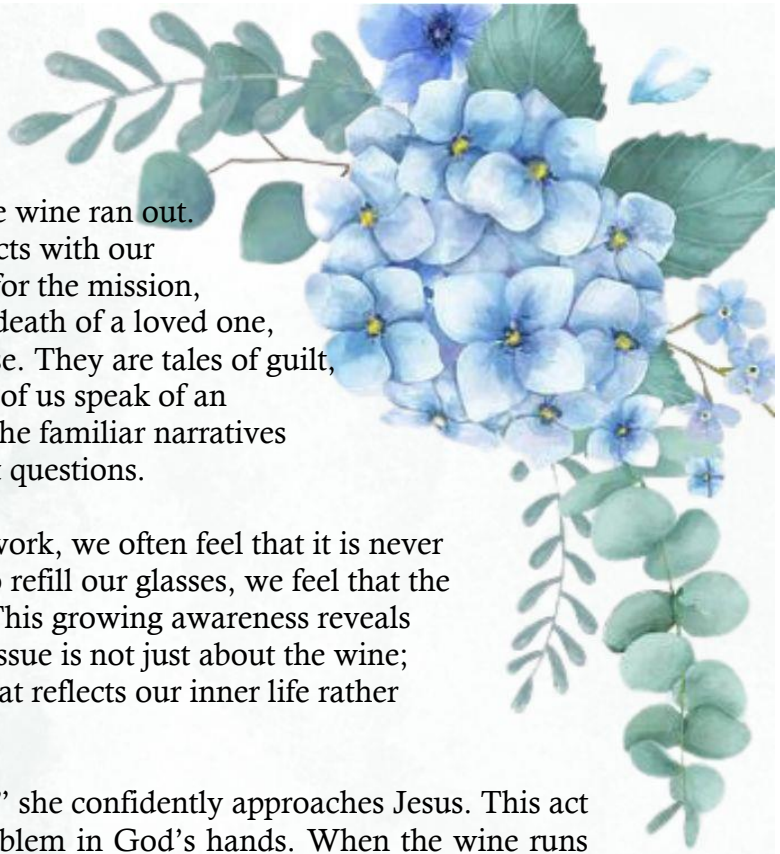
“They have no wine...”

These words of Mary reveal a profound truth that resonates with our own lives, a truth that we all encounter at some point. Wine symbolizes happiness, love, and abundance. It signifies the fullness of a banquet and the joy of a celebration. Yet at the wedding feast in Cana, the wine runs out, leaving the newlyweds in an embarrassing situation.

Similarly, there are times in our lives when the wine runs out -- when the glass is empty, and the celebration ends. Life can feel barren, lifeless and dull, devoid of happiness and love. It seems as though nothing within us is growing or fermenting.

In these moments, Mary’s words invite us to reflect on some profound questions: Where in our lives has the wine run dry? Which relationships have lost their spark? What parts of us remain unfulfilled?



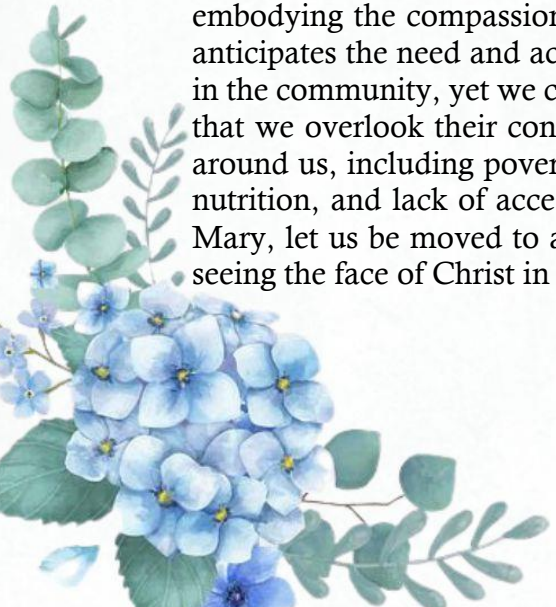


Each of us has a story to tell about the day the wine ran out. These stories might involve unresolved conflicts with our Sisters in the community, the loss of passion for the mission, a lingering illness, a persistent weakness, the death of a loved one, or the deeper longing for meaning and purpose. They are tales of guilt, disappointment, confusion, and regret. Some of us speak of an indescribable yearning, while others recount the familiar narratives of unanswered prayers, doubts, and persistent questions.

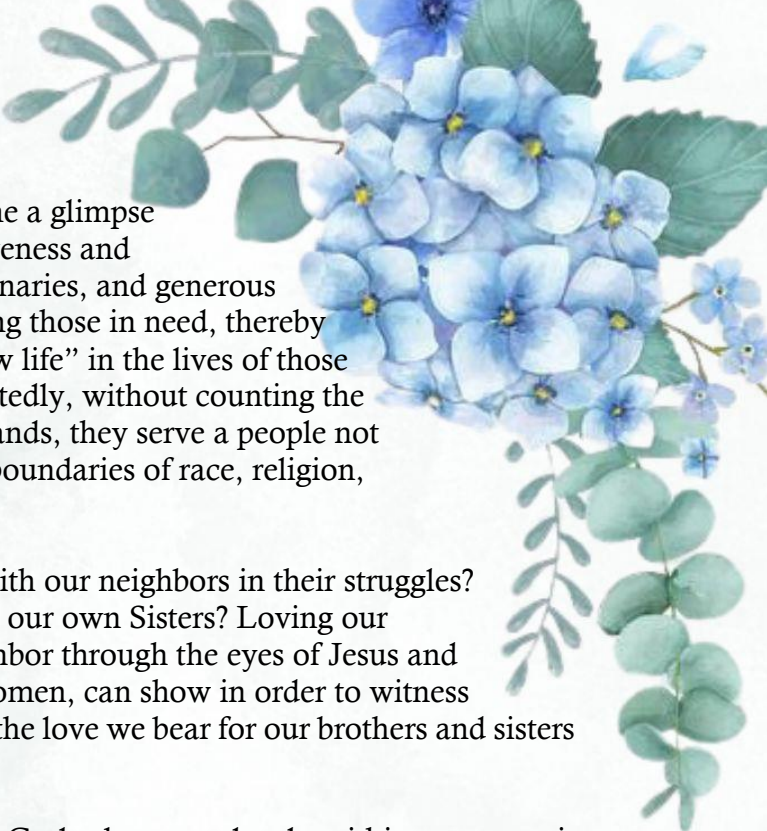
Despite our best efforts, intentions and hard work, we often feel that it is never enough. No matter how many times we try to refill our glasses, we feel that the wine of our lives is constantly running out. This growing awareness reveals that we cannot replenish it on our own. The issue is not just about the wine; it is about people. It is a spiritual condition that reflects our inner life rather than any external circumstance.

When Mary notices that “they have no wine,” she confidently approaches Jesus. This act signifies that **Mary prays**. She places the problem in God’s hands. When the wine runs out in our lives, we too are invited to turn to Jesus. Christ is the true wine maker, the author of our lives. No matter how it feels or what we think, the day the wine runs out marks the beginning of a miracle. Christ does not simply refill our glasses; He transforms our lives, changing water into wine. Our lives then overflow with the finest wine, filling us with the life of God, intoxicating us with the blood of Christ, and immersing us in the influence of the Holy Spirit. That is the miracle of Cana, a miracle that continues to unfold. Christ continually pours Himself into the empty vessels of our lives, offering Himself as the good wine—extravagant, bountiful, and limitless. Let us learn from Mary who shows us how to put our concerns in God’s hands. She teaches us to pray, to kindle the hope which manifests to us that our concerns are also God’s concerns.

“They have no wine” also indicates that **Mary is the attentive Virgin**. She is attentive to the Word of God and to the needs of her cousin Elizabeth when it was announced that she too was with child. At the wedding feast, Mary remains attentive to the needs of others, the bride and the groom. She notices that the wine is running low, and so she goes to her Son and shares her concern. She is not closed in to herself, worrying only about her own needs. Her love makes her reach out to others.



In our own lives, attentiveness enables us to reach out to our neighbors, especially in their times of need, offering a presence that reflects the enduring love of God. Mary’s merciful heart is evident in her immediate concern for the well-being of the wedding guests, embodying the compassionate love of God. She does not wait to be asked; instead, she anticipates the need and acts with quiet confidence. Our closest neighbors are our Sisters in the community, yet we can sometimes become so absorbed in our own needs and work that we overlook their concerns. We must not turn a blind eye to the suffering of those around us, including poverty, wars, malnutrition, illnesses due to unsafe water and poor nutrition, and lack of access to health care and education services that many face. Like Mary, let us be moved to act with attentiveness, merciful compassion, and anticipation, seeing the face of Christ in every person we encounter.



Our recent visit to Congo and Ethiopia gave me a glimpse of the miracle at Cana. I witnessed the attentiveness and compassionate hearts of our Sisters, lay missionaries, and generous benefactors, who dedicate themselves in helping those in need, thereby restoring the “cup of joy” and the “wine of new life” in the lives of those they serve. They give of themselves wholeheartedly, without counting the cost. Leaving behind their families and homelands, they serve a people not their own, demonstrating that love knows no boundaries of race, religion, culture or ethnicity.

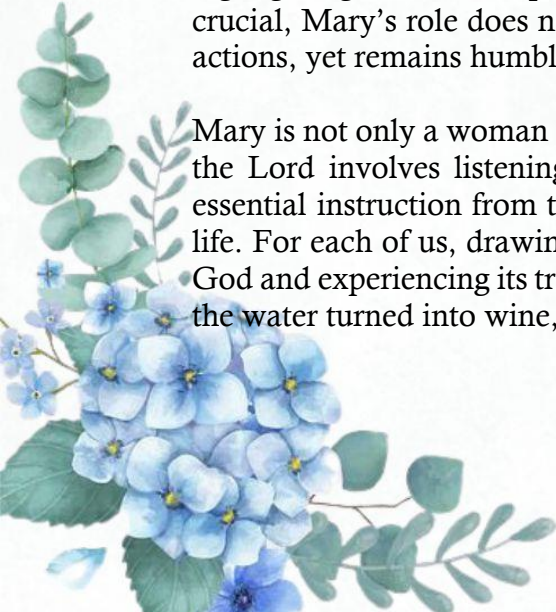
When can we say that we have truly walked with our neighbors in their struggles? How attentive are we to their needs, especially our own Sisters? Loving our neighbor is rightly done when we see our neighbor through the eyes of Jesus and Mary. The visible sign that we, consecrated women, can show in order to witness our love for God to the world and to others, is the love we bear for our brothers and sisters whatever is their state in life.

Pope Benedict explains that when the love of God takes root deeply within a person, it enables them to love even those who do not deserve it, as God does to us. (Angelus, November 4, 2012) This divine love teaches us to see others not merely with our own eyes, but with the eyes of God—the gaze of Jesus Christ and Mary. This gaze springs from the heart, looking beyond mere appearances to discern the deepest aspirations of others: their need to be heard, cared for and loved. Conversely, by opening ourselves to another, by reaching out and making ourselves available, we also open ourselves to experiencing God, to sensing His presence and goodness. Love of God and love of neighbor are inseparable and are mutually related.

Like Mary, we are called to see our neighbors with the eyes of faith, trusting that God is at work in each person we encounter, no matter how hidden His presence may seem.

Do whatever he tells you.”

Mary confidently approaches the servers and instructs them, “Do whatever He tells you.” This short yet profound statement invites us to open our hearts to Jesus, who came to serve and not to be served. Mary manifests a **persistent faith** in Her Son, even though she may not fully grasp His response. This is a powerful witness to us, which echoes an invitation for us to trust in Jesus' plan for our lives, even when we do not fully understand it. The strength of Mary's faith seems to be the catalyst which brings forth the miracle. In the Gospel of John, Mary's role in Jesus' ministry is clearly defined, highlighting both her deep bond with Him and the significance of her involvement. While crucial, Mary's role does not overshadow the glory of Jesus. She plays a vital part in His actions, yet remains humbly in the background.



Mary is not only a woman of prayer but also of action. Her actions remind us that serving the Lord involves listening to His Word and putting it into practice. This simple yet essential instruction from the Mother of Jesus serves as a guiding principle for Christian life. For each of us, drawing from the jar symbolizes entrusting ourselves to the Word of God and experiencing its transformative power. Like the master of the banquet who tasted the water turned into wine, we too can proclaim, “You have kept the good wine until

now.” Indeed, the Lord continues to offer the best wine for our salvation, just as His grace continues to flow from His pierced side.

We can imagine Mary standing beside us today, gently pointing to Jesus and whispering: “Do whatever He tells you.” In our present situation, what might Jesus be asking of us? Undoubtedly, He calls us to follow Him, to become His disciples, just as Mary faithfully followed God’s will.

As we celebrate today, let us pray for the grace to see our neighbors through the eyes of Mary. May we approach each person with attentiveness, a merciful heart, and persistent faith, relying on God's strength to guide us in our service. May her example inspire us to serve with love, to trust without hesitation, and to live as true disciples of her Son.

On this joyous feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we also turn our thoughts and prayer to our dear Mother Myriam de Ste. Anne Kitcharoen. May this special day fill her heart with renewed strength, peace, and the blessings of our Blessed Mother, who watches over her with tender love.

Mary, our Mother, intercede for us and help us to grow in your virtues, so that we may become more like your Son in our love for God and for our neighbors.

Affectionately in our Lady,

S. Maria Goretti Lee
Superior General

