

# Our daily "Feast of Cana"

**Dear friends, at the conclusion of this 2016 version of the Salesian Family Spirituality Days, I want to highlight four aspects concerning the life of our Family, starting with today's gospel. I want to talk about a party, a Mother, a need, and a simple but essential element.**

Dear friends, at the conclusion of this 2016 version of the Salesian Family Spirituality Days, I want to highlight four aspects concerning the life of our Family, starting with today's gospel. I want to talk about **a party, a Mother, a need**, and a simple but essential **element**.

The fourth Gospel begins its "book of signs" with **a party**: a wedding party, even. So it's a party full of life and hope, a spirit of unity and sense of family and friendship. In such a party, if everything goes well, all feel like brothers and sisters, involved in the story of this new couple's past, with their roots and origin stories. In addition, everybody looks hopefully to the future of this new family, this new tree that they hope will give much fruit. Thus a mixture of past and future is experienced amid the different roots and the anticipated fruit.

We, the Salesian Family, too, are somehow in a wedding party, not only during these days, but every time we meet and, I would say, every day, in the daily unfolding of our lives, services, and missions. We, too, are a blend of cultures, roots, and stories, and celebrating our fraternity, friendship, and communion is good for us, because this fills us with hope for the future of this tree, which keeps on giving many fruits of life and holiness.

At Cana there was **a Mother**, Jesus' mother, as the gospel says. Even today here in Rome, at the Pisana, there is a Mother: Jesus' mother herself. Do you see her? Do you hear her? Of course she is here; otherwise the party wouldn't be the same. She comes to protect, encourage and, of course, hug our fraternity. The fourth article of the Charter of Identity of the Salesian Family says that we're "a charismatic and spiritual community ... linked by relationships of spiritual kinship and apostolic affinity." This is a beautiful expression! And this kinship has, at its center, a Mother who, as a woman and a mother is, always able to be attentive to her beloved ones, always with open and watchful eyes in order to notice her children's needs, although these "children" are already adults. So it happened in the puzzling wedding at Cana in Galilee. She advises her son Jesus, "They have no wine." And without wine, the party's over. Earlier there was wine, but it has run out. In the heart of the party, one of the elements that characterize it is lacking, and not only in a literal and superficial sense, but rather in a deep, symbolic meaning.

Here, in the heart of the party, the image of life and also of our Family, suddenly **a need** emerges. We, who are kin as well as male and female friends of Don Bosco, know well that our world shows many needs today. The postwar world (after the great world wars, the Cold War, some regional wars, etc.) seemed finally to set out for a better, more united, more supportive, more human, more fraternal, and more developed world. This had made us dream with the "better place" of our prayer on Friday morning. But we often become aware that we're still missing so much.

Our question should be: what more can we do, because we're already doing so much? It's very important, I would say fundamental, to learn from our Mother to be careful, always to look up, without staying closed in on ourselves, our own struggles and pains, selfishly. Let's always be alert and watchful, especially with our eyes addressed in friendship to the least, the young people for whom we were born, founded, and sent. Once again, I never tire of asking for a real Salesian Family, which goes out of itself, out of the walls of our works, with the ability to go beyond its own projects, programs, successes, and comforts.

The world, and many times even our own communities and families, is short of wine, that is to say, the joy and celebration of life, which is expressed in a life that's worth living. And we, dear friends, we have inherited a cellar! Our cellar is our shared charism!

Our beloved father Don Bosco wrote in a letter to Father Costamagna, then provincial in Buenos Aires. I refer to the letter written on August 10, 1885, on the occasion of the forthcoming retreat of the confreres. Among other things, Don Bosco said: "I wish that I could myself preach a sermon, or better, give a conference, on the Salesian spirit that must animate and guide our actions and everything we say. Let the Preventive System be characteristic of us."

There's a Spanish translation that gives a lot of power to this sentence: "Que lo nuestro sea el sistema preventivo," especially taking into account both the context and text of the letter. In a letter to Bishop Cagliari, then vicar apostolic in Patagonia, four days earlier, we read: "Charity, patience, gentleness ...; do good to all; harm no one. This must apply to the Salesians among themselves, among students, and among others, both inside and outside [our houses]."

We said that without wine, there's no party. For us, dear brothers and sisters, the Preventive System is our own. So then, without the experience of the Preventive System we're missing the spirit (that is to say, we're not journeying together in an adventure of the Spirit!), and there's no real Salesian life: the party's over.

This wine doesn't come from us; rather, it's the fruit of walking along the path indicated by Jesus and animated by the Spirit. Jesus made wine from water. But the servants followed the instructions of Jesus' Mother, to provide and bring water. This is a simple but necessary and basic **element**. Let's take care to heed "Mary's commandment," as our sister Maria Ko called it, to deliver our water, even if what's required of us may seem very strange. But let's take care: what's required of us, though it seem simple and of little value in comparison with the needs and with the missing "wine," is itself essential and deeply important. In fact, in order to get real water, we need to draw from the well, and the deeper we can go, the purer water that comes up, because it rises from the bottom of our heart and our being.

In my strena I proposed a path of depth for you, young people, and the people to whom we've been sent. This journey, which I called "Challenges and Proposals," has a double movement, going deep within and going outward. I enumerate it again: looking within; seeking God; meeting Jesus; becoming/being His; appropriating the fundamental values of human life, such as family, friendship, solidarity, a sense of the Church, and life as a gift; and, finally, developing a plan of life that responds to God's call.

**A party, a Mother, a need, and an element** to be delivered. Let's give to many people the gifts from the cellar we've inherited from Don Bosco's heart, and let's be accompanied every day by her, Jesus' Mother, who takes care of us and teaches us to do the same for each other.

May our Mother, the Help of Christians and Mother of the Church, help us walk and serve in every corner of the earth and "*with Jesus, journey together in an adventure of the Spirit.*"