

## Assistant Pastor's Column

by Fr. Paul Ward

SUNDAY, MAY 20, 2007

### Mary, the Pope, Cana and Germany

*They may have more in common than you think!*

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, comes to mind on this day when we celebrate, at St. Joseph Parish, the 2nd annual "Maifest," one of several German festivities we have at this parish of German origin.

The Pope visited Altötting, Germany, last fall; and on September 11, 2006, he delivered, before the image you see on this page, a powerful reflection on Mary, the Mother of God, at the wedding at Cana. During this month of May, all good Catholic hearts turn to Mary with affection and devotion, for Jesus gave Mary to us as our Mother at the foot of the cross. When Jesus said to Mary and John, "'Woman, behold your son,' and to his disciple, 'behold your mother'" (Jn 19:26-27).

The Pope taught, that day, that the term "woman," was not meaningless; indeed, when Jesus calls her mother, both at the Wedding at Cana (Jn 2:1-11) and at the foot of the cross, there is a meaning associated with the history of salvation. By this word Jesus not only points to the cross, as we have just explained above, but also he makes her the new woman, the new Eve, mother of all the living. The Pope says, "But this title ['woman,'] really expresses Mary's place in salvation history... In the *Gospel of John*, then, Mary represents the new, the definitive woman, the companion of the Redeemer, our Mother: the name, which seemed so lacking in affection, actually expresses the grandeur of Mary's enduring mission."

Then the Pope comments the mysterious answer to Mary, when she intercedes on behalf of the embarrassed couple who had no wine. Indeed, she turns to Jesus still and tells him that the world has not the wine of the Kingdom of Heaven, and begs his mercy, a prayer which he cannot turn away. The mysterious answer Jesus gave was, "Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour has not yet come" (Jn 2:4). The pope exclaims, "We want to

object: you have a lot to do with her! It was Mary who gave you flesh and blood, who gave you your body, and not only your body: with the "yes" which rose from the depths of her heart she bore you in her womb and with a mother's love she gave you life and introduced you to the community of the people of Israel." But that's the point; Jesus wanted to teach both Mary and all of us that the "yes" of Mary is the key to understanding the relationship between

her and Jesus, and her and us; and even Jesus and us. For Jesus says, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love" (Jn 15:10). No one fulfilled these words of Jesus more perfectly than Mary by her obedience to God's will, which the angel Gabriel revealed to her (cf. Lk 1:30-33)

Let us, therefore, in May, turn to Mary, for her tender love for us places her always before Jesus, and she prays for us. She asks for salvation for us. She asks for

mercy for us. She asks even for the transitory goods which we find on our way, by which we find peace and happiness in our service to God.

There are many who claim that drawing close to Mary is a slight against God. But we see at Cana how pleased God is with Mary's intercession. Jesus, who is God, loves Mary as his own mother, for she is indeed his mother, and therefore the Mother of God. Who would be pleased with a neighbor who had no love or affection, or even spoke ill of, his own mother? And why would Mary do anything but bring us closer to Jesus, her Divine Son? True devotion to Mary, especially the imitation of her virtues, but also the use of the Rosary and the Scapular, is an extraordinarily powerful means by which to grow close to Jesus and to thereby grow in freedom from sin and in holiness. Love Mary, go to Mary, and listen to what she says at Cana: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5)



Our Lady of Altötting, Germany, to whom is attributed many miracles across many centuries.