

Lesson 2: Garden of Eden Revisited

I. INTRODUCTION

In our first lesson, we noted that while there are not very many direct references to Mary in Sacred Scripture, she is deeply woven into the fabric of the text.

We also saw that the Marian verses and passages are profound and rich with meaning. And we learned that we can discover that meaning by reading the Bible as Jesus taught the Church to read it.

- Reading the Bible that way first requires looking for the literary, or the literal, meaning of the text as it is written in context.
- After that, we can look a bit deeper to find the spiritual meanings to which the literal meaning points.

To see those spiritual meanings we need to understand the connection between the Old and the New Testaments. That connection is God's plan for salvation history.

And that plan unfolds through his covenants with his people.

All the covenants of the Old Testament—the covenants God made with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David—pointed to and prepared people for the New Covenant in Jesus Christ.



This connection between the Old and the New Covenants is made clear through the use of typology.

- Typology recognizes that the people, places, and events of the Old Testament are actually signs that point the way towards Christ and his saving work.

II. MARY IN THE GOSPELS

In this lesson, we're going to put those tools (the literal and spiritual senses of Scripture, including typology) to work by focusing on one of three Gospel scenes where Mary plays a prominent role: The Wedding at Cana.

- As you read through the Gospels, you'll notice that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John tell many of the same stories about Jesus.
 - For example, all four report the story of the Last Supper;
 - Similarly, all four Gospels tell the story of Jesus' baptism.
- The few stories involving Mary, however, are different.
- Each one is unique to the Gospel that records it.

Only Luke, for instance, tells the story of the Annunciation.

Matthew alludes to it, but gives no details. Mark and John omit the scene entirely.

Likewise, the event we'll study in this lesson—the wedding feast at Cana—is only found in John's Gospel.

III. THE WEDDING AT CANA

- Let's start by reading the actual account in John 2:1-11

W Read John 2:1-11

At first glance, the story seems very straightforward.

- Jesus turns water into wine.
- And Mary is the one who called his attention to the fact that the wine had run short.
- But again, as we discovered last week, when it comes to scriptural references to Mary, there is always more there than meets the eye.

IV. A NEW CREATION

The first clue that tells us we should be looking for a deeper meaning is the story's opening words: "*On the third day.*"

The "third day" from what? The words point us back to what has already occurred in the Gospel.

Basically, the Cana story marks the conclusion of a series that began in John's first chapter.

- John begins his Gospel with a kind of recapping of the creation story found in the Bible's first book.
 - His first words are the same as the first words of Genesis: "In the beginning..." (Jn 1:1, Gen 1:1)
 - Also, just as the first verses of Genesis describe God creating light and separating it from darkness, so John's first verses describe Jesus as a light shining in the darkness. (Gen 1:4, 17-18; Jn 1:5)
 - In the creation account in Genesis 1, we hear of "the Spirit of God...moving over the face of the waters."

John, in turn, shows us the Spirit hovering above the waters of baptism. (Gen 1:2; Jn 1:32-33)

V. THE SEVEN DAYS OF CREATION

Moreover, just as Genesis begins by telling us about what happens on each of the seven days of creation, John seems to narrate an account of a new creation week. He does this with a Genesis-like repetition of the words "the next day."

- The first event in the Gospel of John happens on Day One: It is the introduction of John the Baptist (Jn 1:19-28).
- Then, on the next day (Day Two), John sees the Spirit descending on Jesus at his baptism. (Jn 1:29-34)
- On the next day after that (Day Three), Jesus calls Simon Peter to follow him. (Jn 1:35-42)

- And on the day after that (Day Four), Jesus finds Nathanael, who then becomes one of the 12 Apostles, resting under a fig tree. (Jn 1:43-51)

Days 5 and 6 – the Missing Days

So what happens on the fifth day?

We don't know.

- John skips right over the fifth and sixth days, picking up his account on the seventh day.
- He signals that it is the seventh day with the words, “On the third day, there was a marriage...” (Jn 2:1)

The only way that sentence makes sense is if we understand it in the context of all the other days that have come before. Those are the days signaled to us by John's repeated use of the phrase, “the next day.”

If we haven't clued into what John has been doing, we're left asking, “On the third day since what?”

- But, reading those words in context, we see that John is saying “On the third day since the last day we mentioned, which was Day Four.”
- Then, doing a little basic math—adding up four plus three—tells us that what is described as “the third day” is actually the seventh day of the new creation week.

VI. THE APPEARANCE OF THE WOMAN . . .

So what's the point?

- John is using this seven-day structure to show us that the coming of Jesus into the world marks a new creation.
- In this new creation, a new people of God is to be born by faith in Jesus and by the power of water and Spirit in baptism. (See Jn 1:12, 29-24; 3:5)
- Importantly, it is on the seventh day of this new creation that Mary makes her appearance.

And that is no coincidence.

VII. . . ON THE SEVENTH DAY.

- If you look back at Genesis 1, Adam and the animals were created on the sixth day. (Gen 1:24-2:1)
- After the man finished naming the animals—and after he realized there was no helper “fit for him” among the beasts—he fell into a deep sleep. (Gen 2:19-20)

And while he slept, woman was formed from his side. (Gen 2:21-22)

- The ancient rabbis believed that Adam's sleep marked the passing of the sixth day.

- Accordingly, they also believed that it was on the seventh day, when Adam awoke, that he met his bride, Eve.

This means that in the first creation account, woman also appears for the first time on the seventh day.

So Eve appears on the seventh day and Mary appears on the seventh day.

VIII. A SIGN OF THE NEW CREATION

- It's also important to note that in Genesis, the seventh day is the pinnacle of creation. It's when creation is completed, sanctified, and perfected.
- The seventh day, as the Book of Exodus tells us, was instituted as an everlasting sign of God's perpetual covenant with creation.

W Read Exodus 31:16-17

Now, the Greek Old Testament word that is translated there as "sign" also makes an appearance in John's story.

- John describes Jesus' miracle as the beginning of his "signs."
 - What that tells us is that the seventh day in John's creation account is the new Sabbath. It is the sign of the new creation and the New Covenant.

- Moreover, Mary’s presence on this new Sabbath tells us that she is part of the “sign” of God’s new and everlasting covenant with his creation.

IX. THE NEW ADAM

Before we take a closer look at Mary’s role in this new creation, we need to understand her son’s role. We need to do this because the two cannot be separated.

- For John, as for the other writers of the New Testament, Christ is the New Adam. He has come to undo the damage done by the first Adam. And throughout the Gospels, we see parallels drawn between the two.
- Adam is called to be the firstborn son of God in creation. (Lk 3:38)
- And Jesus is the Son of God, the firstborn of the new creation. (Heb 1:6)
- Adam is created sinless.
- Jesus is sinless and conceived without sin. (Heb 4:15)
- Adam is called to have royal dominion over creation. (Gen 2:15)
- And Jesus is the true King of Kings. (Rev 19:16)
- Adam is to serve as the high priest of creation. (Gen 2:15)¹

- And Jesus is our true High Priest. (Heb 8:1)
- Adam is the covenant representative of all humanity in God's first covenant with man (Rom 5:18-19).
- And Jesus is the covenant representative of all humanity in the New Covenant (Rom 5:18-19).

X. NEW EVE

So you see, the writers of the New Testament all understood that Jesus was the New Adam, the one who had come to right what the first Adam had wronged.

- And John in particular understood that if there was a New Adam, there also needed to be a New Eve.

In his Gospel, he shows us who the New Eve is. Let's look a little more closely at how he does that.

- In the creation story, only the name of God is spoken.
 - The first man and the first woman are not identified by name, but simply as "the man" and "the woman."

The Cana story is similar.

- Notice that only Jesus is referred to by name. Mary never is.

- John refers to her as “the mother of Jesus” and Jesus calls her “woman.”

This is another indicator that John intends us to find a deeper symbolic connection between what happens at Cana and the Genesis story. We should keep that deeper meaning in view as we try to understand what seem to be the more difficult passages in the account.

XI. SCOLDING MARY?

The most infamous of these so-called difficult passages is Jesus’ response to Mary when she informs him about the shortage of wine:

- “O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come” (Jn 2:4).

Quite often non-Catholics use this text in their attempts to “prove” that Catholic devotion to Mary is “unscriptural.”

They try to argue that Jesus obviously distances himself from Mary in this passage—He even seems to scold her.

This interpretation, however, doesn’t hold up to careful study. Perhaps to our modern ears Jesus sounds like he is telling Mary to mind her own business.

But, we have to remember that the Gospel wasn’t written in English. It was written in Greek and recounts a dialogue that originally took place in a Hebrew dialect.

- The actual words Jesus uses (literally “what to me and you”) were a figure of speech common in the Greek and Hebrew of his day.

That figure of speech has several shades of meaning in the Old and New Testaments.

- Yes, it sometimes refers to a situation where someone is reluctant to do something, there is a simple disagreement, or even hostility (Judg 11:12, 2 Kings 3:13, 2 Chron 35:21).
- But, there are also times when the phrase is used to show the consent of one party to the will of another (Mk 1:24, 5:7; Lk 8:28).

Given the context of the story, this certainly seems to be what is going on at Cana.

And those who attempt to use this passage to make it seem like Jesus is angry with his mother or is dismissing her, aren't being true to the text.

13. Scolding Mary, cont.

- First, there is no evidence anywhere in John or the rest of the New Testament to suggest that Jesus felt any hostility towards his mother.

- Remember, Jesus was without sin. Accordingly, he was faithful to the fourth commandment and obeyed his mother and father. (Heb 4:15; Lk 2:51)

There also isn't any evidence in the Cana episode that implies separation or tension between Mary and Jesus.

- In fact, four times in the story's mere 12 verses, she is referred to as "the mother of Jesus" or "his mother"—words which link her closely to her son.

Perhaps the best evidence for what Jesus meant is found in Mary's reaction to his words. She turns to the servants and says, "Do whatever he tells you."

- She certainly doesn't think his words are dismissive; She tells the servants to listen to him. She expects him to respond to her implied request.

And he does.

Had Jesus intended to reproach her, would he have complied with her instructions to the servants?

These same points apply when non-Catholics attempt to drive a wedge between Jesus and Mary based on the passage where Mary comes looking for him with his "brethren" while Jesus is teaching. (Mt 12:46-50; Lk 8:19-21; Mk 3:31-35)

Jesus responds to the man who tells him they've come, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren" (Mt 12:48)? He answers his own question saying that "Whoever does the will of the Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mt 12:50).

We'll deal with the "brethren" issue later, but what we need to realize is that Jesus isn't undermining Mary's role as his natural mother.

Rather, he is exalting her divine maternity. She is the one who completely gave herself over to the will of God and thus became not just Jesus' natural mother, but the Mother of God. As such, she is also the mother of all those joined to Christ, his adopted brothers and sisters. (Rom 8:29, 1 Jn 3:7-10)

XII. "WOMAN,"

So getting back to Cana, we see Jesus didn't intend to scold or distance himself from his mother. But what did he intend?

- The key to discovering that lies in the way Jesus addressed his mother—he calls her "Woman."

Again, the use of that term is often held up as an example of Jesus distancing himself from his mother. But there is no evidence of that.

- Jesus often addresses women that way in the Scriptures. In every instance, he is being polite and respectful to those



women. (See Mt 15:28; Lk 13:12; Jn 4:21, 8:10, 20:13)

It is unusual, however, for Jesus to address his mother that way. In fact, it's unusual for anyone to address their mother that way...at least in Scripture. Nowhere else in either the Bible or the literature of that time is there an example of a son calling his mother "woman."

- What this suggests is that the word, as it's used here, has symbolic value for Jesus and John.
 - That idea gets further support from the fact that "Woman" is the only way Jesus addresses Mary in John's Gospel.

Note that on the cross, when Jesus entrusts Mary to John, he also refers to her as woman: "Woman, behold your son." (Jn 19:26)

XIII. "WOMAN," THE NAME ADAM GAVE EVE

Here again, in order to unlock the meaning of the word's symbolic value, we need to read this passage in light of John's framework of a new creation.

- In the first creation, "woman" was the name Adam gave Eve.

W Read Genesis 2:23

- And in the second creation, the new creation depicted by



John in his Gospel, “woman” is the name Jesus gives Mary.

- A “woman” also figures prominently in another one of the books written by John, the Book of Revelation.

W Read Revelation 12:1-8

Note that John describes that woman as a “sign.”

Presenter’s Note: Some Revised Standard Versions translate “sign” as “portent” in Revelation 12:1 and 12:3. Regardless, it is the same Greek word “semeion” (say-mi'-on) as found in John.

XIV. THE “WOMAN” OF REVELATION

As in John’s Gospel, the Book of Genesis lies behind the scene depicted in Revelation 12.

- The drama that plays out there is the fulfillment of the promise God made in the Garden of Eden.

W Read Genesis 3:15

Do you see the connection between that scene and the scene we read a few moments ago from Revelation 12?

- In Genesis, after Adam and Eve ate the fruit, God promised that throughout human history there would be an “enmity”— a total and complete opposition between the serpent and the woman.

He also promised that there would be enmity between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman.

- Furthermore, God promised that there would be a decisive struggle and that the woman's male child would crush the serpent's head.

In Revelation, we see that battle metaphorically unfold.

- There, a woman gives birth to a male child, a child whom the serpent attempts to devour.

That serpent also makes war against the rest of the woman's offspring.

- But ultimately he is not successful; He is defeated by the woman's offspring.

XV. THE "WOMAN" OF GENESIS, REVELATION, AND CANA

- By comparing the promise God made in Genesis 3:15 with the dramatic fulfillment of that promise played out in Revelation 12, we can see that the "woman" depicted in both is the "woman" we meet in Cana—Mary.
- In Revelation, the woman...
- gives birth to a male child...
- who is under attack by the serpent...

- The serpent, however, doesn't just attack her "male child"; he also attacks her other offspring. (Rev 12:17)
- That serpent is explicitly identified as the serpent of Genesis in Revelation 12:9:

“And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”

But who are the woman, the child, and the other offspring?

- We're told in Revelation 12:5, that the child is the long awaited Messiah. He is the "male child" who would "rule all the nations." That could only be Jesus.
- Which means that the woman, his mother, has to be Mary.
- And the other offspring? They are the people of God, the Church, those who, as we're told in Revelation 12:17, "keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus."

XVI. UNDERSTANDING CANA

So, how does this help us understand John's account of what took place at Cana?

- Both Revelation and Cana share the same background



story: The creation story from Genesis.

- In both Revelation and Cana, Mary is called “woman.”
- And in both Revelation and Cana, Mary is described as the Mother of Jesus, the Messiah.
- It’s also important to note that she is associated with Jesus’ other disciples.

In Revelation, she is the mother of other offspring, the people of God.

And in Cana, through her influence, Jesus performs his first miracle—the miracle that serves as a catalyst for his disciples’ belief in him.

W Read John 2:11

XVII. THE NEW EVE

Ultimately, through setting up those parallels, John depicts Mary as the New Eve. He shows us that just as Adam was a type of Christ, so too was Eve a type of Mary.

The original mother of all mankind foreshadowed and illuminated the role the mother of Jesus would play in Salvation History.

At Cana, in a sense, the New Eve radically reversed the decision of the first Eve.

- The first woman led the first Adam to commit his first evil act.
- But at Cana, the new woman leads the New Adam to perform his first glorious work.
- Eve counseled Adam to defy God and eat the fruit.
- The New Eve, however, brings the people's needs to her son and teaches them to obey him in faith: "Do whatever he tells you." (Jn 2:5)
- The first Eve was the "mother of all living." (Gen 3:20)
- And by teaching the disciples and servants to believe in Jesus, the New Eve becomes the mother of the Church. She is the mother of all believers, of all who live in Christ.

XVIII. THE NEW EVE AND THE CHURCH FATHERS

Justin Martyr

This recognition of Mary's role in salvation history took root almost immediately in the early Church. One of the first Christian apologists, Justin Martyr articulated that recognition.

In the second century he wrote:

- "Christ became man by the Virgin in order that the disobedience that proceeded from the serpent might receive its destruction in the same manner in which it

derived its origin.

- For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, having conceived the word of the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death...
- "...But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy when the angel Gabriel announced the good tidings to her that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her, and the power of the Highest would overshadow her, wherefore also the Holy Thing begotten of her is the Son of God;

And she replied,

- 'Be it done unto me according to Thy word.' And by her has He been born to Whom we have proved so many Scriptures refer and by Whom God destroys both the serpent and those angels and men who are like him." (Dialogue with Trypho the Jew).

Saint Irenaeus

Justin Martyr wasn't, of course, the only one of the Church Fathers who saw what John saw.

- St. Irenaeus—the early Church's first systematic theologian and a disciple of St. John's disciple Polycarp—also recognized Mary's role as the New Eve in the new creation.

He wrote:

- "The knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. The knot which the virgin Eve tied by

her unbelief, the Virgin Mary opened by her belief...”

- Going on he says: “If the former [Eve] disobeyed God, the latter [Mary] was persuaded to obey God, so that the Virgin Mary became the advocate of the Virgin Eve. And thus, as the human race fell into bondage to death by means of a virgin, so it was rescued by a virgin.” (Adv. haereses, 3:22)

XIX. THE MESSIAH’S WEDDING

Once we recognize Jesus as the New Adam and Mary as the New Eve, we can also recognize the wedding at Cana for what it is: A sign of the New Covenant.

- As the Sabbath was the sign of God’s first covenant with creation...
- The wedding feast at Cana—with its faithful servants and miraculous abundance of wine—is the sign of God’s New Covenant with creation.
- In the first covenant, we witness the marital union of a man and a woman—Adam and Eve.
- And in the New Covenant, we have a man and a woman present at a wedding.

Mary, of course, is Jesus’ mother, not his bride. But in order to understand the supernatural depths of the biblical symbolism John intends here, we need to set aside our



“natural” ways of reading, and employ some of the spiritual ways of reading we talked about last week.

Think back to the full account of the Wedding at Cana that we read earlier in this lesson. Did you notice who was not mentioned?

- The couple being married.

Isn't it odd that a wedding feast would be described, but not the bride and groom?

It is odd. But it makes sense when you understand what John reveals to us through this story.

- First, he reveals to us who Mary is.

As the “woman,” Mary becomes the locus of a host of biblical symbols and expectations. She is, simultaneously:

- A daughter of Israel;
 - The mother of the new people of God;
 - And the virgin bride of God, the one who conceives and bears his Son through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Even more important, in this story John reveals who Christ is.
 - When the headwaiter tastes the wine, his remarks to the “bridegroom” seem to be addressed to Jesus: “You have kept the good wine until now.” John stresses this reading by immediately



following the headwaiter's remark with these words: "This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee."

Here, John shows us that one of the oldest promises of the Old Testament has finally been fulfilled. What promise?

- That God would come as a divine bridegroom, who would wed his people in a new and everlasting covenant.

XX. THE PROMISED BRIDEGROOM

We see this promise of "messianic nuptials" with increasing intensity in the writings of the prophets, in certain Psalms, and in other Old Testament writings like the Song of Songs.

For example...

- In Jeremiah 2, Israel's love for the Lord is compared to the love of a bride.
- In Ezekiel 16:32, Israel is described as an "adulterous wife" who has betrayed her husband, the Lord, for the false gods of other nations.
- In Isaiah 54:4-7, God tells Israel, "Fear not, for you will not be ashamed... For your Maker is your husband... the Lord has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off... for a brief



moment I forsook you but with great compassion I will gather you.”

As discussed in Bible and the Sacraments, Hosea gives perhaps the clearest description of God’s intentions.

- There, in language reminiscent of Genesis, God promises a new covenant with creation that will be capped by his marriage to Israel.

W Read Hosea 2:20-21

- In Hosea and elsewhere, the messianic blessings of the New Covenant are accompanied or symbolized by “new wine.” (See also Joel 2:19, 24; Zechariah 9:16-17, 10:7; Isaiah 25:6)

W Read Amos 9:13-14

- That same type of imagery appears in the Song of Songs, which symbolically depicts the wedding of God to his people. (See 1:2, 4; 4:10; 5:1; 7:9; 8:2)

XXI. 27. THE BRIDEGROOM REVEALED

At Cana then, John presents Jesus as the promised bridegroom, the one who will provide new wine at the wedding feast of the New Covenant.

- Again, our interpretation is helped by looking at John’s Revelation, which concludes with a cosmic wedding feast.



- It is the “marriage supper of the Lamb,” the marriage supper celebrating the union between Christ and his bride, the Church. (see Rev 19:9; 21:9; 22:17)

There too, this feast marks the pinnacle of a new creation.

W Read Revelation 21:1

- These depictions of Christ as the lamb and the bridegroom in the Book of Revelation echo John’s Gospel.
 - There, Jesus is also identified as the “Lamb of God” and as the bridegroom. (Jn 1:29, 36; 3:29)
 - John also shows us at Cana that Jesus is the New Adam, the firstborn of the new creation. That implies what Paul makes explicit when he calls Jesus a “type” of Adam (Rom 5:14) and the new or last Adam. (1 Cor 15:21-22, 45-49)

XXII. THE BRIDE REVEALED

- Likewise at Cana, John reveals that Mary is the “bride” of the New Adam - the New Eve - the mother of the new creation.
- It is significant that the only “vow” spoken at this wedding is what Mary says to the servants: “Do whatever he tells you.”

In Mary's words, we hear a distinct echo of Israel's covenant traditions.

- We find essentially the same phrase used to describe Israel's ratification of the covenant at Mt. Sinai—the covenant God made through Moses with Israel after bringing them out of Egypt. There, Israel vowed, “All that the Lord has spoken, we will do.” (See Ex 19:8; Deut 5:27)
- That phrase is also used in accounts of Israel's renewal of that covenant. (see Josh 24:24; Neh 5:12)

So, the words Mary speaks at Cana are a sort of covenant vow on behalf of the servants and the disciples. They express their acceptance of Jesus and their willingness to live by faith in his Word.

That the servants share her faith, is reflected in their response to Jesus. Told by him to fill the jars, they filled them “to the brim.” (Jn 2:7)

And that, of course, is the response to which Mary still calls all disciples. It's the response to which Mary calls us.

- As the New Eve, she is the mother of all who live in Christ.

She is our mother, telling us to obey Christ in faith. At the Annunciation, Mary stood in the place of Israel, Daughter Zion, hearing the words God's chosen people had

longed to hear. The Messiah is coming.

Similarly, at Cana, Mary stands in the place of the Church.

- She is the bride of Christ, the woman consecrated completely to God and the helpmate of the New Adam in bringing about the promises of the new creation.

At Cana, there is no rebuking of Mary by Christ, as some would have us believe.

- Rather, at Cana we see Christ honor his mother by beginning his public ministry at her request.
- At Cana, the place of Mary in Salvation History—as mother, bride, and intercessor—is made clear.

Next time, we'll look a little more closely at another “type” of Mary depicted in the Old Covenant—the Ark of the Covenant—and unpack its implications for one of the Church's more contested teachings about Mary—her perpetual virginity.

Preparation for Next Lesson

Follow-Up Reading and Preparation for the Next Lesson

- Hail, Holy Queen, Chapter 3 & Chapter 5 (pp. 89-94 & 102-107)
- 2 Samuel 6:2-16
- 2 Maccabees 2:4-8
- Luke 1:39-43, 56
- Revelation 11:19-12:2

Additional study resources can be found on the St. Paul Center website at: www.salvationhistory.com.