

## Day 2 of Novena Wedding Feast of Cana

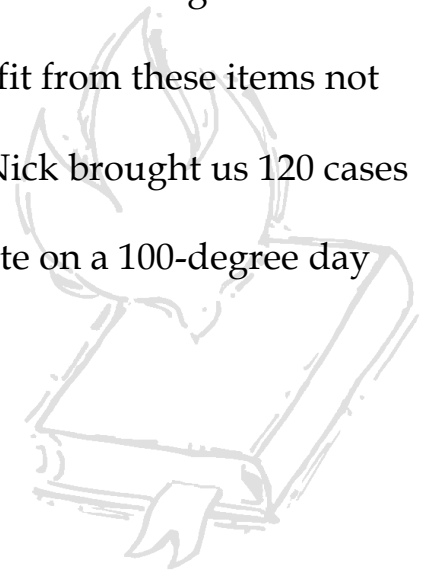
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski  
July 18, 2026

Is 62: 1-5  
Ps 96: 1-2, 2-3, 7-8, 9-10  
Jn 2: 1-12

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The Sunday prior to me offering this particular homily, I got a call just before the noon Mass in Spanish (I get a lot of these types of phone calls prior to the Masses I celebrate!). This particular call came from a gentleman named Nick Skokna.

Most always at the last minute, Nick calls me and says, “Father, I have an entire huge monster van load of food to give to the needy.” I usually give Nick \$100 for gas money so that he can bring us the “motherload” of pre-made meals, breads, pastries, meats, fruits and vegetables from the Costco warehouse in Oakbrook, IL to our Border Town Parishes. In these cases, the vegetables and fruits we get are getting close to their expiration date so we benefit from these items not being sold at the Oak Brook Costco. One time, Nick brought us 120 cases of “Carl Buddig Salami” that we had to distribute on a 100-degree day



in the middle of the summer because we could not keep any of that salami in our respective refrigerators.

So when Nick called me at the last minute prior to our 12:00 noon service the week before this homily, he told me that a vanload of food would arrive at the end of our noon Mass in Spanish. As promised, after the service concluded around 1:30 p.m., our entire parish community lined up outside our rectory garage as Nick pulled up in his vehicle. As the food was being distributed to the left and right, practically *none* of what Nick brought to us made it inside the garage – all of it was distributed to the needy of our area!

What we try to do is take care of the people in our community who are in need – when you lose five-hundred jobs in a year like we did in 2025, this is what you do to feed the hungry. When I get these kind of food hauls, first I usually contact the food pantries at St. Anne's and here in Momence and I have them pick up whatever food we have. After they have collected whatever they fit into their vehicles, we then go on Facebook and invite anyone from the area to come and pick up whatever is left. I think this last Sunday, by the time the food pantries

filled their cars with those Costco pre-packaged dinners, all we had left were four cases of avocados, four cases of bananas, and a whole slew of boxed groceries for the taking.

I have another family, the Counts family, that has some kind of relationship with one of the local Dollar Trees in the area and they bring us all kinds of interesting items from the seasons gone by such as Easter Peeps (which are the bane to my existence), graduation decorations and candies from the last few months left over at the stores. The Counts family also brings us all kinds of kids' games and toys and we distribute all of these items out to all kinds of different people. When I flew to Vietnam the night of Easter, I took some of the prizes from the Dollar Tree and I gave them out to some of the one-hundred-seventeen students who were attending classes with me in my Business Ethics course that I taught them on-site.

As a result, we have distributed tens of thousands of cases of food and supplies over the last few years to the needy of the area. Once on Facebook, a person responded to what we were doing by saying, "Why do you not take care of us? Why do you only take care of some people

and not others?" What ends up happening is that when I post whatever leftover supplies we have on Facebook, by the time some people get to reading our postings they see what we have written too late because by the time they arrive to our garage, all the food is gone! There is only so much we can do to help others; there are only so many mouths we can feed.

As I have been preaching in the parishes I serve this last year alone, we have lost over five-hundred jobs last year along because a chocolate factory in Momence burned to the ground last year. Last year, a Momence Packing Plant (which functioned as the slaughterhouse for Johnsonville Brats) just shut its doors and consolidated their workforce with a neighboring town. Last year, a greeting card company left our area as well. As a result, a lot of people from our area who lost their livelihood are seeking food and drink for survival.

These last few years, I constantly reflect on the 25<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Matthew's Gospel, "When I am hungry, you gave me food. When I am thirsty, you gave me drink. When I was naked or in prison, you came to

visit me... because when you do it for the least of my brothers, you do it for me.”

One of the very few talents that I have in this ministry is being able to contact certain people I know who can help me bring food and resources to these areas for those who are in need, whether it be Nick Skokna or whether it be the Poor Clares from the Annunciation Monastery or friends from other parts of the country who have been exceedingly generous to us. These good people know of our perilous situation; they give us as much food and supplies that they can... and it is never enough – there are too many mouths to feed and so few of us. No matter what we do, we are never going to have enough resources to serve those in our area because there are too many mouths to feed and too few of us who are doing the work.

I often reflect on our inability to take care of everyone around us. In the gospel on which we focus today, Jesus was asked if he could do something about the wine that ran out at the Wedding Feast of Cana. After hesitating for a moment, Jesus performed what scholars of the

bible called the first of seven “Signs” in the Gospel of John that reveal who Jesus is and what his purpose was on earth.

Some years back, I actually visited the city of Cana in Israel (I first visited the city in December 2017 and then in February 2022, before all the wars took place). During these visits, we entered the chapel where Jesus changed the water into wine and invited couples to renew their marriage vows at this site. Both times in Cana, I was asked to bless wedding rings; we then blessed the couples who wore those rings. We do the same at the parishes I serve by offering wedding anniversary blessings on the first Sunday of each month; if a couple reaches a milestone anniversary on any given month, we purchase for them papal blessings as our gift to their marriages.

We do all this because we are trying to follow the gospel message, which tells us how Jesus’ earthly miracles are incidental (changing water into wine, multiplying loaves of bread and fish) but the true sign reveals that Jesus is God, the Father’s Son, and that his true purpose is to carry us to everlasting life in heaven.

Because of our Original Sin, we are going to die; because of our Original Sin, we lost everlasting life on earth. What Jesus is doing is trying to feed us to avoid what scholars call “the second death,” the death of the soul. In the gospels, Jesus is trying to feed us and love us, to nourish our souls so he can carry us to heaven, thus revealing himself as God.

This sign of changing water into wine was the first documented instance in the Gospel of John where Jesus revealed that he was. Jesus was not just a prophet; he was *the* prophet. He was not just a priest, he was *the* priest. He was not just a king, he was *the* king. The Father’s Son is the beginning and the end; God is our alpha and omega. The Father sent the Son to give us the Spirit that lives in our hearts, so that if we are doing God’s work, we nourish, we feed and we take care of others as Jesus did for us.

That said, our *true* purpose in life is not just to get a person through the day with earthly food and drink, but to get them to the other side of life into heaven by offering them our Lord’s body and blood, the food that leads us to the other side. *That* is why we celebrate these Novena

Masses for all of you. We are offering these Masses and these intentions for all those individuals who have sent us prayer cards, prayer intentions. We are recording all these things and preparing for the big feast day because we want you to know that we love you, that we want to take care of you. We are doing these things because for 146 years during this St. Anne Novena, we do what those who have gone before us did, including Fr. Achilles Bergeron did in the early 1900s when he was bringing trainloads of individuals from Chicago to the St. Anne Novena in St. Anne, IL because his parents brought *him* to this Novena when we was growing up in Bourbonnais, IL to be fed by these heavenly delights, venerate the relic and personally witness the miracles that took place during those venerations.

We read that one of those times in 1904, a woman named Matilda Cunnea was healed by this relic while she was wheelchair bound. After the miracle, the family left the wheelchair behind, which now sits in the back of St. Anne's Church. The family ended up donating a stained-glass window in the Church as thanks for Matilda's healing. We learn how scores and scores of people have been healed by this relic. These

good souls also were not fed for the food of the day; they were fed for everlasting life. By venerating that relic, God healed them and they revealed God to our community through those healings and what God can do to take the impossible and make it possible, to take the water and turn it to wine. If God could do something as simple as that for them these last 146 years, then when God talks about getting us to heaven, we realize that if we follow him, we will achieve that purpose, that ultimate goal in our lives.

The Father and the Son are united by a Spirit who lives within all of us. The Son came into the world because of his Blessed Mother chose to become the handmaid of the Lord through the Annunciation. The Blessed Mother came into the world because God answered St. Anne's prayer. From their example, we need to do the same; we need to keep nourishing and we need to keep feeding. We need to keep loving our neighbor with the word that is going to feed us, the word of God and we need to keep inviting the world to this Novena so that others might encounter the same miracle we do every time we share this meal together.

This presence of God that is going to lead us and guide us so that we can get to heaven. By living this life and feeding others the way God fed us throughout history and feeds us today, let us live like Christ by doing the same. Let us share that same spirit, that same food, that same body and blood of Christ with the people that we meet. This is our prayer.