

Sometimes we all need a swift kick in the butt. I mean this figuratively of course, but often times in our busy-ness and self-concern we as humans forget who we are and what we're supposed to be about. When this happens it becomes necessary to get a little boost, or kick in the pants, to wake us up and put us back on the right track. And surprisingly, today's gospel shows Mary doing this very thing to Jesus her son, yet in a slightly more considerate and clever way. But we first might ask "what track did we (Jesus included) supposedly jump off of; what is it we're supposed to be doing and be concerned about, and why is it so important? Well, our first two readings give us a clue.

The first reading from Isaiah tells us about how much God the Almighty (who doesn't *need* anything (***including us***), who doesn't need to *do* anything) how much He nevertheless takes *delight* and *joy* in us. This statement is simply astonishing. And on top of that, this delight and joy he takes in us, is as the delight and joy a bridegroom takes in his bride.

Now those of you who are married, reflect back to those days surrounding your wedding. And those of us who are not married, well we've certainly been around couples at this stage in their lives. Typically those of us who observe bride and groom have either one of two reactions; one we either fawn and fuss over how "in love" the couple is and how beautiful it is, or we either roll our eyes and mutter to ourselves "let's check back in a couple of years."

Both reactions touch some truth about the situation. We marvel at how much one person can delight and take joy in the other, but we also realize they are humans with faults and that sooner or later the bride and groom will realize that too. But Isaiah tells us that God will ***always*** be like the bridegroom, there is no later. God rejoices and takes delight in us despite our faults, despite our ugliness, despite our infidelity to Him.

As Christians we know this by faith. As humans we need to know this by experience. But the only way we will know by experience God's love for us, God's joy and delight in us, is if, in faith, we create this experience for each other in community. This means that the gifts St. Paul speaks about today are not ours to keep, but ours to share.

All our gifts are God-given; we didn't give them to ourselves. So whether your gift is wisdom, faith, raw intelligence, compassion, healing, patience, good counsel, or you name it, God gave them to you for a reason. And I think this reason is this: when your gift is shared, it is God sharing it; it is the recipient experiencing God's love, delight, and joy, in themselves; and it is the gift-sharer being a player in God's plan. This is an astonishing way of running the universe; God the Almighty lets **us** play a part in His love for others.

But there's also a troubling piece to this puzzle. What if we don't share our gift with someone we know who needs it; What if I don't share my gift with someone God intends me to? Is God's plan for that person, or the universe for that matter, ultimately doomed? Well, no; but it wouldn't be good, especially for me. And I don't say this out of fear of some punishment God might hand out to me, but rather out of fear that I have cheated myself; cheated myself out of becoming who I'm supposed to be, who God intends for me to be; God-like.

The Eastern Catholic Church sees our path to salvation not as one that avoids eternal damnation, but rather one that is a process of “divinization”, a process of becoming more like God in our earthly life so that when we die, we are ready for heavenly life, that eternal sharing and receiving of God’s unfathomable love in its fullest.

Sharing our gifts is practice for just that. When we share our gifts, we become like God, because this is what God does. When we benefit from someone's gift, we come to know God because His gift is given to us. Mary was well aware of this fact. When her son was reluctant to help resolve the impending ruin of nuptial hospitality, she reminded him, in her own way, that he had a gift and that gift could be used to further the joy and delight God wished shower upon this couple and their guests.

Mary put Jesus on the spot; she gave him a swift kick in the pants (or tunic I guess) and forced him to be who he really was, to do something only God could do. We don't have godly powers, but we do have godly gifts; and only by sharing them and receiving them will we come to know and appreciate God's love and delight in our earthly lives and fully so in the heavenly one to come.