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2nd Sunday of the Church Year [C]
Sacred Heart Church
Atlanta, Georgia

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Hospitality is a widely treasured virtue in every society. Although we may well differ in the ways that we judge how hospitality ought to be extended. We might welcome guests in diverse ways, but we do seek to welcome them to be sure.

Drinking and eating are among the universal signs of welcome. This story of the Wedding Feast at Cana, a tale of hospitality taken from another culture and from a different moment in time also reveals God's design and plan. For those Christians who may frown upon alcohol consumption, this biblical story must cause them something of a stumbling block. In spite of that Jesus, Mary, and the disciples were evidently enjoying a wedding celebration that involved the consumption of wine – and apparently a goodly amount of wine.

Cana is the location of the first sign – the first extraordinary signal that Jesus performed for His disciples that the Kingdom of God was being born in their midst and He used some of very the elements of hospitality to do so. God's Kingdom is always a welcoming reality. People were invited to the Kingdom to a place where they will be received with much festive joy. God's Kingdom beckons people to come and to experience the welcome that is the essence of hospitality.

This week, we shall commemorate the horrible event of 37 years ago that marked a decision that from the first moments of human life, human beings, infant souls would not always be welcome in our midst, indeed that they could be destroyed at any moment during their process of being born. As a society, we decided that it was acceptable not to be inhospitable to life – a terrible decision to be sure! Things have only

gotten worse during the almost four decades that have passed since Roe vs. Wade was handed down.

We have become a less welcoming, less hospitable world in so many additional ways. We now also choose to disinvite the sick and the elderly from the table of life when their needs become too apparent or too great or too much of an inconvenience for us. We have restored the death penalty and then some communities have applied it with vigor even in the face of the fact that many court trials have had the fairness of their conclusions later challenged.

When the wine of our own self comfort looks as though it may be about to run dry, we dismiss those who might share in the gift of life from the banquet of human existence – truly contrary to the sentiment of today’s Gospel and to the tradition of hospitality that is so much a part of human society.

The rationales for these actions always seem to place ourselves first. A woman’s right to choose, death with dignity, and all the other euphemistic slogans seem frequently to be based on our desire and demand not to be inconvenienced. In short, since Roe vs. Wade became the law of the land, we have become a less welcoming, less human society.

But there is a more precious vintage than our own self consolation and comfort. There is the love for the precious gift of life that comes through Faith and ethical decency. That is a much more precious bouquet than our own personal pleasure and gratification.

When Mary, the one who had welcomed the Infant Son of the Father into her womb, noticed that the young couple – who have remained nameless to this very day – had run out of wine, she told the servers to do whatever He tells you. So certain was she that Jesus would remedy the dilemma and allow the festivities to continue that she simply told them to follow his directions. She tells our society to do the same thing today. She beckons us to remember that Her Son had also later said: "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the one who sent me." [Mark 9:37]

We are called to welcome and respect all life, to accept it and guard it as the gift from God that it constantly is. As many of you know, the very woman whose case was the foundation for the Supreme Court’s

regrettable decision has now changed her opinion. She today laments the events that brought about that decision. It is never too late to change one's attitude regarding the precious gift of life. People who may have made very serious mistakes regarding abortion, euthanasia, or any act of violence against life are able to be forgiven and healed and reconciled to the Father. This week, many people from across our nation, including some from our own archdiocese, will gather in Washington or right here in front of our Georgia State Capital to pray and remonstrate and to remind the nation of the dreadful mistake that we have made in not welcoming and defending life as the most precious bouquet vintage that any of us have ever or will ever savor.