

What happens when the wine runs out?

Roisin was twenty eight years old and worked with my niece at the local Coke Cola Bottling Plant. She got engaged to her fiancé this past Christmas. He was twenty nine years old and a well-known footballer as well as a nutritionist. Both attended the glamorous wedding celebration of his good friend and fellow footballer some months ago.

I am sure that, as they attended that wedding, they made many mental notes about their own possible big day sometime in the future. They experienced the atmosphere and excitement of the occasion and planned to put their own creative touch on their own occasion when it would happen.

Then, three weeks following their engagement, lives were shattered; family hearts were torn to shreds; friends were devastated as the world of a newly engaged couple came crashing down.

On a Saturday morning, following her first week back to work after the New Year, she walked into the local river and disappeared. Someone who was passing saw someone enter the river but they were too late. The alarm was raised. Eventually a name was associated with the person entering the river and a search was undertaken with the assistance of divers and boats. A day later, her body was found. Her parents, fiancé, friends and co-workers were informed. A sense of numbness ensued.

Of course, some folks were quick in judgment indicating that, maybe, the engaged couple had some earth shattering disagreement or argument that spun out of control or the threat of a break off of the engagement so soon after it beginning. Rationalizing reasons were quickly debunked by those who knew the couple.

Hundreds of comments populated Rosin's obituary pages in national newspapers and social media. Comments like, "She was such a beautiful person, inside and out." She was so loving and giving "She was so talented and gifted." "She loved her family."

As I read through the comments, I wondered if she had known such comments, would things have turned out differently. Were all these comments – so true and good in themselves coming too late.

On Monday morning, there was a vacant desk at the Coke Plant. The management decided to take the unprecedented step of closing down the plant for a few hours and gathering the hundreds of workers into its cafeteria to rally round each other and to support one another as experts tried to help the workers unravel their feelings, numbness, questions and emotions.

As I began praying and reflecting on the scripture readings for the following weekend's Mass, my mind kept asking what happens when the wine runs out?

The scripture readings compared God's relationship with his people to a wedding feast, a relationship of love and commitment. My thoughts zeroed in on the gospel story of the wedding feast of Cana, where Jesus worked his first miracle of turning water into wine after being asked by Mary who noticed what was happening and needed to happen to avoid embarrassing the wedding couple.

Yes, what does happen when the wine runs out? What happens when we ask someone how their day is going without realizing that, maybe, their day is not going well or that that they might be having dark and debilitating emotions that their wine is running dry and there is no Mary to notice or care? What happens when we meet someone who is always upbeat and seemingly enthusiastic about life but, behind the façade, their wine of hope is running on empty and there is no Mary to notice and rescue them? What happens when the stranger is not just a faceless one who is dealing with their own inner demons and crosses our path and there is no Mary to replenish their wine supply? What happens to that gentle spirit whose introverted lifestyle masks a deeper yearning for intimacy and understanding and there is no Mary who has the time to recognize the need for new wine as the old is about to run out? What happens when someone, whose life is filled with future loving plans, discovers that the wine of plans and purposes are running dry and there is no Mary to enlist the Master Brewer to set them on the right track again?

What happens when we are put in someone's life's path for a reason and a season and the good Lord calls us to be that Mary when we see their wine is running out?