

**Synge, *The Well of the Saints*
Wesley Advocates**

7 March 2021

Notice that each act occurs in a different season. How does the season suit symbolically the principal action in each act?

Consider the settings: road outside church, Timmy the Smith's forge, road outside church. How does each setting symbolically suit the principal action?

What is the saints' well serving as as source for the holy water? Where is it?

How do we characterize the Saint who brings the holy water? What does he wear? Carry? Say? Value? Why does he agree to cure the Douls? What does he reveal about the efficacy of the first cure? About the efficacy of the second?

How long have Martin Doul and Mary Doul been blind? When we first meet them, what is their mood? What do they believe about themselves and their places in the world? What do they believe about the community around them (Timmy, Molly, Bride, others)?

How do we know that, except for their blindness, Martin and Mary have heightened senses? What do they hear, feel, smell, taste? How do they earn money? Where do they sleep?

What lies have the villagers told them? How important are those lies to the villagers? To the Douls? How do we know?

How frequently does Synge use terms such as *see*, *sight*, *dark*, *look*? What is "a wonder"? How frequently does Synge use that term? What does it mean to Mary? To Martin? To the villagers? To us?

Literally the Douls are blind; figuratively they have exceptional sight. Literally the villagers and the Saint have sight; literally they are blind. What does each see? Fail to see?

In what ways do we see the villagers' cruelty? When is Martin cruel? When is Mary cruel? Martin gains sight first: what does he do? Why does Synge delay Mary's cure for a few minutes—to achieve what dramatically?

At his most hurt and disappointed, Martin longs for punishment to come to Timmy and Molly—what sort of punishment?

Much of the plan depends on the contrast between perception or dream and factual reality. When the play begins, what dreams do the Douls hold to? What happens to their dreams when the Saint offers them sight? What new

dreams arise? What happens to those new dreams? What dreams do the Douls choose to adopt in Act 3? Why?

Despite Martin and Mary's break with the villagers at the end of Act 2, the villagers want them to undergo a second cure. Why?

How do Martin and Mary reconcile? When does the reconciliation begin? How do we know they are suitable companions?

How does Synge comment on the failures (or disappointments) of conventional religion and conventional faith? According to Synge, what is far more powerful than religion in helping us live well?

Martin represents the great poet and mythic hero Oisín—we can tell that from his language and from his awakenings. Cite examples of this parallel. Cite examples of Martin's poetry.

What makes this play a comedy? When is it actually comic?