

III EPIPHANY 2018

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

ROMANS 12.16 St. JOHN 2.1



Weddings and the receptions that follow take a lot of planning. In Jesus's time...weddings and receptions went on for days...the host had to make certain there was plenty of food and wine. The last thing the host wanted was for the wine to run out.

The Marriage at Cana is the perfect Gospel to close out this year's relatively short Epiphany Season. Epiphany is the Season when we talk about the manifestations...the striking appearances...Jesus makes through his teaching and miracles.

The transformation of water into wine is the first miracle attributed to Jesus in John's Gospel. Mary is the invited guest...it's possible this was the wedding of a close relative of hers...and Jesus and his friends were also invited.

Because Jesus went to the wedding with his mother and disciples...it shows us he approves of marriage... the "holy estate he adorned and beautified"...we talk about at the beginning of the Marriage Liturgy. And what about the wedding reception...Jesus and his disciples and Mary were having a good time...and Jesus wanted the wedding guests to continue enjoying themselves.

When Mary notices the waiters are upset because they don't have any more wine to serve, she asks Jesus to do something. "Son", she says, "Don't you see they are out of wine"? Jesus probably said something like, "Yes, mom, I know, but it's not the right time for me to do something". Mary might have smiled at Jesus, and then told the waiters to do whatever he said.

Our parents taught us to wash our hands before sitting down to dinner. The wedding guests did the same thing several times in an elaborate ritual before they sat down to eat. Jesus told the waiters to fill the seven 30-gallon pots that had been used by the people to wash up before dinner with fresh water. He then told them to take a cup to the dinner host, who said it was the best wine he had ever tasted. Jesus had just performed his first miracle, and gave the wedding guests better wine than they had started with.

The Gospel shows us Jesus has control over the natural order of things...something only God has control over! The Gospel concludes that his disciples believed in him, perhaps because they had just seen him perform a miracle and knew it was more than some magic trick...or perhaps because they sensed they needed to follow Jesus and come to know him better. Jesus wants us to believe in him and follow him too.

When we follow Jesus it means we want to try to act in the same way he would. In his Letter to the Romans...Saint Paul asks to behave in ways that give glory to God and are in the best interests of others. What he was asking us to do is put into practice the Great Commandment: Love God above everything else; love others as we want to be loved.

Listen to the practical advice Paul gives us on how to apply LOVE in our lives:

- Don't be proud; accept humble duties
- If someone has done you wrong, don't repay him with a wrong
- Try to live in peace to the best of your ability
- Don't take revenge; God's justice will prevail
- Give food and drink to your enemy; he will burn with shame
- Conquer evil with good

Jesus never acted out of self-interest. He said he came to serve others and not to be served. And that includes making things right at something as ordinary as a wedding reception. Jesus wanted the people at the wedding reception to continue having a good time...he made that happen by solving the host's dilemma...turning water into award-winning wine...an epiphany...a striking appearance.

Jesus is about to make a striking appearance in this place now...giving us something better than what we started with...the miraculous transformation of bread and wine into his real flesh and blood...a foretaste of the Epiphany to come...the Great Wedding Feast in Heaven.

