

III Epiphany 2023

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

Romans 12.16-21 St. John 2.1-11



Weddings can be simple or elaborate. They take place in different venues: a church, a hillside overlooking a beautiful beach in Hawaii, a friend's backyard. All weddings require some planning. The goal is to have everything run smoothly.

The Wedding at Cana gives us a rare glimpse into the social life of the adult Jesus and his family and friends. He was about 30 years old and the action in the Gospel takes place shortly after his Baptism and the time he spent in the desert getting ready for his public ministry.

Saint John the Evangelist is the only Gospel writer who records the Wedding of Cana. It is a watershed moment for Jesus and an epiphany...a striking appearance...for those who were with him.

Cana was a small town in Northern Galilee about three days journey on foot from the place where John the Baptist was preaching and where Jesus was baptized. This is Gentile territory with a sizeable Jewish population.

In those days the engagement period for a man and woman could go on for years. The actual wedding was brief. The wedding reception could last for days. Most of us have attended at least one wedding. We don't give much thought to the food and beverage service at the reception afterward...we anticipate there will be plenty.

John records Mary was present at the wedding. She appears to have been the main guest. Depending on which translation of the Bible we read...Jesus and some of his disciples were also invited...or they just tagged along.

We don't know anything about the bride and groom. They may have been relatives of Mary. We do know Cana was a working class community where everyone knew each other. It was more than embarrassing when the host ran out of wine...it was a disaster.

Mary knew the host was in a terrible predicament. He faced ridicule and

humiliation for what would have been considered a gross lack of courtesy...he failed to provide enough wine for the reception. Something had to be done...right now! The situation had to be fixed...discreetly. There was no reason to further embarrass the host. So Mary asked Jesus to help.

We might cringe at Jesus' response, "What business of that is mine? My time has not yet come." He is not being disrespectful toward his mother. He is using a common and acceptable way of speaking. He is telling her he is well aware of the problem. She gets what he is saying and tells the waiters to do what he says.

Jesus used the wedding reception in a small backwater town in Galilee to perform his first miracle and kick off his public ministry. The wedding guests didn't care where the wine came from...they just wanted more. What they got was better than any wine they had every tasted. The epiphany...the striking appearance...is the presence of Jesus at the wedding feast. He is better than any wine. The Gospel concludes by telling us his disciples believed in him.

We memorialize today's Gospel in the Liturgy for Holy Matrimony in the *Book of Common Prayer*. We acknowledge Jesus "beautified", he glorified and endorsed marriage. The Wedding at Cana also shows us Jesus and Mary and their friends knew how to have fun. Did God's Son have fun and enjoy life? Yes...and he wants us to enjoy life too.

At every Mass Jesus gives us something better than what we started with...himself in the Sacrament of the Altar. Ordinary bread and wine become for us his Body and Blood...an epiphany...a striking appearance like nothing else. The Mass has often been called a window into heaven...looking forward to the Great Wedding Reception waiting for us in heaven.

Jesus has revealed his glory (his Light) to us...with grace and truth he has shown himself to be the Light of the World...in Word and Sacrament...and that gives us every reason to believe in him too.

