

III Epiphany 2025

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

Romans 12.16-21 St. John 2.1-11

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“They are out of wine”...Mary said to Jesus. These are not the words the host of any wedding banquet wants to hear. Jesus replied to Mary, “You must not tell me what to do.” He is not being disrespectful of his mother...he is using a common form of speech. Mary did not understand he was fully aware of the embarrassing situation and was prepared to take action. And he did!

The Wedding at Cana is important for a number of reasons. Jesus chose Cana, a small and impoverished town near Nazareth, in Gentile territory, to perform his first public miracle. John the Evangelist calls this the “first of his signs” and he is the only Gospel writer to record the event. John considers it proof Jesus is the Son of God by showing he has power over nature...to change water into wine.

Mary told the waiters, “Do whatever he tells you.” In his book *Walking with Mary: A Biblical Journey from Nazareth to the Cross*, author Edward Sri writes these are her last recorded words in the Bible...at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry...not at the foot of the cross. When the waiters brought the water turned into wine to the host, he was surprised to find it was the best wine he had ever tasted. Jesus saved the best for the last.

The Wedding at Cana also shows us Jesus approves of weddings. In Jesus’ time the wedding ceremony wasn’t a religious rite...it was more of a public event. It began with the betrothal...with the wedding taking place later...sometimes years later. The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony in the *Book of Common Prayer* reminds us the marriage between a man and woman was instituted of God, symbolizing the mystical union between Christ and his Church, and it is a holy estate adorned and beautified by Jesus’ presence at the Wedding at Cana.

Jesus also approves of wedding banquets and he wanted the guests to continue enjoying the festivities. Jesus turning water into wine is a profoundly incarnational act. He solved the host’s dilemma, and set his mother’s mind at ease. This first miracle was an epiphany...a striking appearance...only for his disciples...and they believed. Now...John tells us...it’s an epiphany...a striking appearance...for the entire world.

The Wedding at Cana is the event Jesus used to perform his first miracle and he did so with great humility. He didn't grandstand, he didn't give a talk from a hill, and he didn't raise someone from the dead. He simply told the waiters to go get some water and take it to the host. When we act with the same kind of humility...we become better epiphanies...striking appearances...for Jesus.

In the Epistle, our friend Saint Paul continues the lesson in humility from last week. He instructs us to behave in ways that give glory to God and are in the best interests of others. Our lives in God's Service demand we conduct ourselves accordingly:

- *We must not be proud; we must be willing to accept humble duties*
- *If someone has done us wrong, we must not repay him with a wrong*
- *We must do everything possible on our part to live in peace with everybody*
- *We must never take revenge; we must never pay back; God's justice will prevail*
- *Instead we should give food and drink to your enemy; he will burn with shame*
- *We must conquer evil with good*

Saint Paul instructs us to show the same kind of humility Jesus showed. We mustn't hate people who have hurt us. That can often be a hard thing to do. We have to remember when it came time for Jesus to fulfill his mission on the cross...he never lashed out at the people who were hurting him. He asked God to forgive them.

Jesus gave the guests at the Wedding at Cana more than they started out with...the best wine ever. He will soon give us more than what we started with...ordinary bread and wine given to us as his Body and Blood. What we will experience here today is an epiphany...a striking appearance. And we see...and believe!

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