

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

It's the second Sunday after Epiphany, today. We've left the manger where Baby Jesus once laid, and move one step closer to the cross. Truly, this is what Epiphany is all about: revealing to you that the babe lying in the manger is the same son of Mary and son of God, who will suffer the piercing of nails and the scourging of whips, of whom the centurion observing all this would proclaim: "Truly this man was the son of God!" (Mk 15:39)

The Gospels don't give you much transition time—other than a quick story about Jesus getting lost in the jumble and scolding His parents for not knowing that He must be about His Father's business—we jump from birth to Baptism rather quickly (that was last Sunday already). Jesus' baptism is quite the Epiphany. All three are present there: the Son coming up from the water, the Spirit descending like a dove, and the Father speaking from Heaven above. Three persons, One God—Holy Trinity. That's Epiphany.

But there's still more to be revealed—that's why the Epiphany season is 6 weeks long! It's true that Jesus is God. The Father made that known most clearly in Holy Baptism. When Jesus stood in the Jordan, He stood there for you. He entered your baptism—your suffering, your death, your crucifixion. And so it's to *you*, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, that the Father says, "This is my beloved Son; with *you* I am well pleased."

Jesus' journey to the cross was made known in His baptism. And, to be sure, His Baptism was completed in the cross. So it only makes sense that this journey, from Baptism to cross, continues today.

Today, the Second Sunday of Epiphany, there's a wedding to tend to—the Wedding at Cana. Many are already familiar with today's miracle: Jesus saved the day by turning water into wine—the party can and must go on! But what is so Epiphany-like about that? Is it simply that we have a *magic* Jesus—one that does neat party tricks? If only the college students knew about *this* Jesus—they'd have no problem spending a little more time with Him! No, it's not the miraculous that Jesus is so concerned about. And that's not Epiphany anyhow. Epiphany, as already pointed out, is the revelation of Jesus as God and man who dies. Epiphany has one concern: getting you ready for the cross.

It doesn't seem like a very good place to start, though—a wedding and all. Weddings are times for joy and celebration. They're the public festival celebrating the love between man and woman—friends, family, co-workers, and even some acquaintances get invited. There's only one concern once the ceremony comes to a close: Make sure there's enough wine!

Well, that seems to be today's problem. And so the Mother of God makes this known to her maker: "They have no wine" (Jn 2.3). Does Mary come to Jesus because she'd really like a glass of merlot? Did she get left out? Or is she concerned for the wedding's host—it's awfully embarrassing, isn't it! And what made her think Jesus could do anything about it anyway? He hasn't done any miracles yet. No calming the storm, walking on water, healing the paralytic, or giving sight to the blind. "This is the *first* of the Jesus' signs," John reminds us in verse 11.

So what did Mary expect of Jesus? Jesus' response shows that He was just as confused about her request as we are: "Woman, what does this have to do with Me?" (2.4) But, as is often the case, Mary teaches us what it means to believe in the Son of God: "And turning to the servants she commanded them, 'Do whatever He tells you.'" (2.5)

And now the story gets interesting—although Jesus basically told Mary 'no,' it all runs along as if He said, "sure thing." "There were 6 stone jars for the Jewish rite of purification," John tells us. (2.6) Jesus orders the servants to take all 6 and fill them to the brim with water.

(2.7) Then, without any magic spell, abracadabra, or the waving of hands, Jesus simply says, “Now draw some out and give it to the master.” (2.8)

For a miracle, this is pretty insignificant. We’re used to a good show. At least he should pretend to struggle, or appear to strain Himself! But that’s not how it is with Jesus. No show, no self-glory, no false pretenses. Actually, no one at the wedding even knew that Jesus did this—except for the servants who filled the jugs, as well as Mary and the disciples.

Now, we know how the miracle ends: the water that the servants drew out for the master wasn’t only wine, it was the best wine. (2.10) It was wine that only a fool would bring out to a bunch of drunken party guests. This is wine reserved for an intimate gathering, a special occasion—not for those who’ve already had a bit too much to tell the difference!

But again, that’s how Jesus works—and more certainly, that’s how He answers prayer. You come requesting the mundane, everyday sort of concern. He comes with gifts of grace and lets even a bunch of rotten sinners in on the loot. He has no fear of running out. Those 6 stone jars, full to the top, equal about 600-900 bottles! His Gospel isn’t too precious to be hidden away in a wine cellar with a costly price tag attached. No, it runs freely. It comes to those least deserving it, even to those who never recognize or confess that it is Jesus who gives it. He gives the best and He does it much more foolishly than we ever would.

But despite this great promise that He has more than enough for you and gladly gives it—you think lightly of prayer. You say: “What’s the use—no one seems to hear, or answer the way I’d like?” You’re turned off when you don’t get what you want. And sometimes it seems you’re just too busy.

*Repent.* That isn’t how faith talks. Faith trusts the Lord to give you all things—the mundane and the exceptional—and to do so in abundance, even if He says ‘No.’ Even more, the Lord has given prayer to you as a gift. It’s yours as a privilege of the baptized—to call God Father and to ask for all good things. And on top of this, it pleases the Father to give: to give Himself to you in the Son by the Holy Spirit.

That is who Jesus is and that’s Epiphany. And where we meet His grace and gifts in abundance, we find His cross. Those 6 stone jars that Jesus commanded the servants to fill with water were used for purification under the law. But with Jesus’ Word, in answer to prayer, those jars were given a new task: to carry wine that would proclaim His death until He comes again.

Now the wine served at the Wedding Feast of Cana is *not* the blood of Jesus. But, from the time John wrote His Gospel until today, the Church that hears this miracle knows of no other wine in such abundance, except the wine that *is* the blood of Christ in the Lord’s Supper.

And so the disciples see the glory of Jesus. A glory that, for John’s Gospel, is seen most clearly in the crucifixion: “When Jesus had spoken these words, He lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You.’” (Jn 17.1)

Epiphany is all about getting you ready for the cross. Today it’s a wedding, last week was a baptism, and next week will be Jesus standing in the synagogue proclaiming that He’s the One about Whom Isaiah prophesied. In all of this, it’s the son of Mary, the Son of God, who goes to the cross for us. There He suffers and dies. His body breaks and His blood is shed. His glory is revealed. He answers prayer. All of this He now gives to you in His Word of sins forgiven. He gives it through the water of Holy Baptism, and the Body and Blood of Holy Communion. He hears your prayer, takes all your sin, and purifies it by His blood, given now in an ever-flowing vine—600-900 bottles worth. There’s no need to fear that you’re too big a sinner or too long gone for this forgiveness to work. Your prayer isn’t too high-sighted or common for Him not to hear and give. With Jesus there’s no running out, there’s always more—even if He’s a bit foolish with it.

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