

C. D'Angelo+
St Thomas's Huron Street
9:30am/11:00am
16 January 2022

“Our capacity to receive Him, is our longing for Him.” May I speak in the name of God:

Father, Son and Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

The liturgical time following Christmas is ultimately one extended meditation on how the earthly life of Christ is an epiphany—how the Incarnation as manifested throughout Christ's ministry, in its various moments, is, in its entirety, all one shining forth of God's light and glory into the world.

The recent Gospels we have heard: the Adoration of the Magi, the Baptism of the Lord, and the sign of turning water into wine at the Wedding Feast of Cana in Galilee today, are each decisive moments in the Gospels where the glory of God in Christ shines forth for us to behold and be transformed by. Each is simultaneously a showing forth of the divine glory and also an epiphany of the glory we are called to share in.

With the Adoration, we see how the Incarnation draws all people, Jew and Gentile, into fellowship with the living God, the God who, in such great humility enters our world in the flesh as a tiny baby to transform us so that we might become like God.

With the Baptism in the Jordan at the hands of John the Baptist, the beginning of Christ's public ministry in the Synoptic Gospels, we see how Christ, though sinless, enters into the place of sinful humanity to draw us into the heart of God so that empowered by the Holy Spirit we might know ourselves to be God's beloved children with whom our heavenly Father is well pleased.

And then today, we have the first of the signs Christ performed, presented by John as the sign he performed at the Wedding in Cana, where the ordinary becomes extraordinary through the presence of Christ, his mother and his disciples at the wedding feast.

It is important to notice that in John's Gospel, the beginning of Jesus' ministry did not begin in the temple of Jerusalem or anywhere else that could be considered to be an especially 'sacred' or 'noteworthy' place but begins in a home where a wedding feast is being celebrated in a tiny, insignificant village.

The Cana episode elevates the mundane, in this case, revealing that a home is a sacred place where God can manifest his glory. The Book of Common Prayer picks up this traditional interpretation describing how "Christ adorned and beautified" the honourable estate of Holy Matrimony "with his presence and first miracle that he wrought in Cana of Galilee." Yet, as one commentator observes:

"There is a strange paradox in the attitude of so many people to the place that they call home. They would admit at once that there is no more precious place in all the world; and yet, at the same time, they would also have to admit that in it they claim the right to be far more discourteous, far more boorish, far more selfish, and far more impolite than they would dare to be in any society of strangers... It is the tragic fact that it is so often strangers who see us at our best and those who live with us who see us at our worst. We ought ever to remember that it was in a humble home that Jesus manifested His glory. To Him a home was a place for which nothing but His best was good enough" (Barclay, William. *The Gospel of John*. 1st Ed. Westminster John Knox Press, 86).

Indeed, in today's Gospel, either because of insufficient means or improper planning, there is an embarrassing lack threatening the integrity and joy that is meant to be enjoyed in this home, on this special occasion. And, yet Jesus, his mother and his disciples have been invited to this home, to this wedding feast...

In John's Gospel, we hear nothing about the annunciation to Mary, and yet, we know that Mary would have known the special circumstances surrounding the conception of Christ: she realized that the power and wisdom of God is found in her Son in a unique and unprecedented way. And so, she prompts him to do something now that the wine of gladness and celebration has given out...

The mention of the 'third day,' the 'hour' and Christ's 'glory' help to bring into focus the reason for Christ's apparent resistance to his mother's suggestion. In John's Gospel, the 'hour' is the moment of Christ's glorification which is his crucifixion, followed by the resurrection on the 'third day'. Christ is making clear that his entire coming in the flesh is focused solely on the glory of his dying on the cross and his rising on the third day in obedience to the Father and that he did not come to take a detour into any other purpose.

And so, in John's Gospel, miracles are not just isolated, one-off manifestations of his power responding in an ad hoc way to human need but are to be viewed instead as 'signs' revealing and communicating the power of his own death and resurrection. In this case, the act of changing water into wine (in the astonishing volume of 520 Liters!) becomes a lived parable, a sign, of the messianic wedding banquet that comes by way of Christ's cross and resurrection. The good wine kept until now is Christ himself, who is present with us, who we commune in the intimacy of the depth of our own inner life, who, sacramentally we commune with in baptism and through the Eucharist so that

we might taste the good wine of joy and gladness of the age to come, sharing in this joy both now and extending in a fuller way into eternity. By his Incarnation, baptism and changing of water into wine, Christ elevates what we might consider to be merely natural and material, human flesh and water, into the means by which the glory of God is made manifest in the world.

In a Christmas Eve sermon, one of the central figures of the Oxford Movement, E.B. Pusey described this elevation of the mundane in and through us in the following way:

“The Grace of God at all times awaits, forecomes, accompanies, follows, encompasses us. It is within us, and without us. It comes to us through ordinances, and without them. It never fails us, if we never fail it. It is everywhere, for It is the Holy Spirit, Who is everywhere, since He is God... Although He comes to all alike who look for Him, He doth not come alike to all. He filleth all; but all do not alike contain Him. He, the Same, dwelleth in the Seraphim, on fire with love, and close around this Throne, and in the poorest, weakest, penitent; but not in the same way.... The wider the mouth of the soul is opened by our thirsting desire for God, the more largely he will fill it. Our capacity to receive Him, is our longing for Him” (Pusey, E.B. “Sermon III: Prepare for Seasons of Grace. Christmas Eve.” In *Sermons from Advent to Whitsuntide*. 2nd Ed, Oxford: 1848.

Despite our own our own need, our own embarrassing lack, our own inner- poverty and weakness, which we recognize when we look honestly within, let us invite Christ into our world, into our everyday lives, in to our own homes, into our own hearts, so that, by his Presence, he might transform what is so lowly and lacking in us into a manifestation of the grace and glory of God, filling us with the power of the Holy Spirit, ever deepening our thirst for communion with him.

Amen.