

Epiphany III 2021

This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Amen.

This morning we close out the season of Epiphany with a look at the third manifestation, the Wedding Feast at Cana. If you recall, we began with the Visit of the Magi, followed by Our Lord's Baptism, and now Jesus' first public miracle.

It is interesting that the first recorded miracle chooses to do, isn't some grand performance for all to see. He's not raising someone from the dead, or restoring sight, or even feeding the masses. He will, of course, do all of these, but his first act is making wine. And notice, unlike future miracles, this miracle is only witnessed by a handful of people. Not exactly what we would expect for his public debut.

We should also note the location of the miracle: the obscure, backwater hamlet of Cana. In fact, to this day, there is only speculation about Cana's exact location. If you visit today, you'll see an area purported to be Cana, in fact, there's a church on the site that

claims to have two of the very water pots used by Jesus. But nothing is certain.

The miracle takes place at a wedding feast, a party that could last as long as seven days. By the time Jesus arrives along with Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathaniel, his mother, Mary, had already been there for some time. As we know, Our Lord is met by the sad news that the wine had run out. This may seem like a small detail to us, but to the bride and groom and their families during this time, it would have been a major social calamity and profound embarrassment. But more than this, like so many happening in the culture of the time, it was considered a curse. Someone in the family had made God angry, so He dried up the wine as a punishment. Rabbis had a saying at the time that, “without wine there is no joy.”

Now enter the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is obviously close to the couple, perhaps even related to someone in the wedding party.

What occurs next is usually what people remember from the story.

Mary approaches Jesus and exclaims, “they have no wine.”

Our Lord’s reply is basically translated, “so what!” Addressing Mary as “Woman” might seem rude, but it’s quite the opposite with the actual translation being, “dear woman.” Formal? Yes. Disrespectful?

No. But it does show that Jesus is separating himself somewhat from Mary as he begins his ministry. Although Mary was “mom”, Jesus was God. And this is not the first time she had been reminded of this. The phrase, “what have I to do with thee” translates, “why do you involve me?” And Our Lord reminds Mary, “mine hour is not yet come”, a saying frequently occurring in John’s Gospel referring typically to the time of his atoning death and subsequent exaltation. Yet here, it clearly speaks to the beginning of his public ministry. It was, in fact, the manifestation of his glory on earth and in the flesh. After this brief dialogue between Jesus and Mary, nothing more is said between the two, at least nothing recorded. Mary simply says to the servants, “do whatever he tells you.”

This demonstrates that Mary now understood that she must submit to the plan and will of God as it was being worked out in her Son’s life. Thus, she was confident that although not knowing if Jesus would intervene in this situation, he would only do that which would bring glory to God.

Well, as we know, he does. Beginning in verse 6, John tells us that there were six stone water pots. Each would hold about thirty gallons, so you’re looking at about 180 gallons.

Our Lord tells the servants to fill the pots. And notice here, they fill them to the brim. That is, they were filled in order to demonstrate that they contained nothing but water; nothing could be added. At some point soon after, it becomes wine. Our Lord doesn't touch the jars or even say anything, he simply wills it.

And finally, we see the true reason for the miracle: The manifestation of Jesus' glory. It was the first of many signs to come that would point people to God. In this case, his own disciples as John tells us that after witnessing this, his disciples "believed on him."

Three points I would suggest we consider in this "First of Our Lord's Miracles."

FIRST, that the miracle involves wine is deeply significant since the fruit of the vine is used in the Old Testament as an emblem of the joy associated with the Messianic age. In other words, the sweetness of the wine is representative of the sweetness of the Gospel itself-the new order that has replaced the old order.

SECOND, the miracle displays Christ as the fulfillment of the ceremonial aspects of the Jewish Law. This is dramatically illustrated by the filling of the stone jars to the very brim. Such observances had

run their full course and so completely fulfilled their purpose, that nothing of the old order remained to be accomplished.

And FINALLY, the fact that the wine that Jesus provided was of such superior quality and taste, also reveals the glory, satisfaction, and sufficiency of the grace he provides to sinners. In this case, the words of Mary, "They have no wine" indicates the profound hopelessness of those outside the Kingdom of God. Yet, just as wine surpasses water, Jesus gives new life to those who had previously only known spiritual death and darkness.

At first glance this miracle might seem somewhat insignificant. Jesus, being a good son, helps his mom out of an unpleasant situation. But always remember to look beyond the obvious when looking at Jesus who uses the simplest of stories to illustrate the most profound truths.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy GHost.

Amen.