

Sermon for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany

“This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested His glory” (John 2:1).

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Every so often, the Lord delights us with a wonderful surprise.

For no matter how many times we may hear or read a given text from the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit still reveals some new gem, some new insight or revelation that just blows you away!

That’s what happened to me this week...

I’ve been reading and studying the events recorded in today’s Gospel reading for years.

But this week as I read through the text anew, my breath suddenly caught in my chest.

My eyes widened, my pulse quickened,

and I actually got goose-bumps on the back of my neck.

How could I have missed this?

How could I have been so oblivious,

so unaware of the scope of what was going on here?

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as we gather here again today to attend the wedding feast of our Lord,

allow me to re-introduce you to the “Miracle at Cana,”

because there’s a whole lot more going on here than simply changing water into wine!

In fact, what we find here is the revelation of God's glory and the fulfillment of the entire Scriptures,

not to mention a picture of these Last Days and a participation in the wedding feast of the Lamb in His kingdom which has no end.

Think about it: The *Third Day*, the *Hour*, the *Glory*, the *Word*,

the *Water*, the *Wine*, the *Feast*, the *Wedding*,

the *Servants*, the *Distribution of the Gifts*... yes, even the *Faith* that makes it all yours - It's all here!

It's all here, "that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that by believing, you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

To begin, the key to better understanding this text is provided by St. John in the final verse where he writes,

"This, the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, *and manifested His glory*" (John 2:1).

Of course, another word for "manifest" is "epiphany," which is what this season in the Church Year is all about, right?

This is the season of revelation, of manifestation,

of God graciously making known for us what we would otherwise never have known for ourselves.

Well, up until now, I have been content to realize that mere mortals cannot change water into wine,

and that Jesus must therefore be God.

After all, only God can manipulate the heavens and the earth and the rules of nature which He established, right?

Therefore, in preaching this miracle, I have been content to simply establish that God is Jesus -

that this man who showed up at the wedding that day was in fact God in flesh,

maker of heaven and earth.

And this is most certainly true!

But the “Glory of the Lord” that is manifest here is actually so much more.

For the “Glory of the Lord” is no mere adjective –

it is no mere description of God’s magnificence or brilliance or power or ability to do things we cannot... It is a noun!

The “Glory of the Lord” is the visible, tangible presence of God with us in creation to redeem us, to save us, to be God *with* us.

Throughout the Scriptures, “The Glory of the Lord” IS the visibly manifest presence of God with His people to save them.

It is “the Glory of the Lord” that appears as the Pillar of Cloud and the Pillar of Fire that led His people out of slavery and death in Egypt.

The Glory of the Lord was the Cloud that filled the tent of meeting and led the people through the wilderness to the Land of Promise.

Ultimately, the Glory of the Lord was the visible body of Jesus dying on the cross, satisfying the death we deserved for our sin,

and leading the way for us into the Land of Promise.

The fact that St. John now links this miracle at Cana with the Glory of the Lord means that everything that took place that day is a revelation of God present among His people with His salvation –

with His death and resurrection –

with His means of grace by which He pours out that salvation for you and for the life of the world.

Take a look: It all begins “on the third day...” Did you notice that?

“On the third day, there was a wedding at

Cana in Galilee...” (John 2:1).

And what is “the Third Day” but the Day of Resurrection, the day the Bridegroom returns to claim His bride -

the day for feasting on rich food and well-aged wine (Isa 25:6)-

the day that marks our Lord’s victory and the glorious salvation which He purchased for us on the cross.

And do you notice who all is there? The whole community -

the whole blessed communion:

the mother (the Church), the disciples, the saints all together with Christ Himself present in their midst.

And what do we find going on there? There was no wine -

no hope for the party - no life, no feast...

not until “The Hour” when Jesus would make ALL things new and resurrect that feast, as it were.

Of course, “The Hour” for the Son of Man to be Glorified on the cross had not yet come,

but Jesus’ comment about that Hour ties what happens next to that very Hour of His Glory -

the Hour of Salvation when “the Son of Man would be glorified” (John 12:23) by pouring out of His blood on the cross for the feast of salvation in His kingdom.

Now don’t miss this part: How is it that this blood of Christ and the saving Glory of the Lord becomes tied to the wedding feast?

By the wine...

Notice how the wine is first connected to the fulfillment of the law, those six jars set aside for the purification of fallen man now filled to the brim, as in completely fulfilled in Christ who kept the Law perfectly in our place.

The cleansing of our sins which was first given to us in the water of purification is now given to us in the wine,

the fulfillment of the Law now poured out for us in the blood of Christ as the ongoing manifestation of His Glory.

And did you notice how this new wine that resurrects the feast is distributed?

Jesus speaks to the servants - NOT the "doulos," which is the usual Greek word for slaves or servants,

but the "diakonois," the "deacons" - the elders, the pastors, the servants of the Church.

The Words of Jesus create this sacrament (which is simply the Latin word for mystery),

and the deacons are entrusted with preparing the elements and distributing the miraculous gifts.

There's a lot here - I know... But are you beginning to see the relationship between the water of Baptism, the Word of God,

the wine of the sacrament, the Glory of the Lord,

the salvation that Christ purchased for us on the cross,

and the Office of the Holy Ministry by which He distributes His gifts all tied together in this "First Sign?"

What we have in the Miracle at Cana is an epiphany of the wedding feast of the Lamb in His kingdom which has no end -

a miraculous feast that is served for you even here again today.

The *Third Day*, the *Hour*, the *Glory*,

the *Word*, the *Water*, the *Wine*,

the *Feast*, the *Servants*, the *Distribution of the Gifts*...

it's all for you!

In fulfillment of the words spoken by the prophet Isaiah this morning,

your salvation has now gone forth before you as a burning torch.

You have seen His salvation, His righteousness, His glory! (Isa 62:1-5).

The land, the feast, the communion is no longer Desolate,

for the Lord is HERE with His miraculous gifts, gathering YOU to Himself as a Bridegroom gathers His bride,

pouring out the rich feast in His body and blood that now unites you with Him for life everlasting.

Purified of your sins, the Law fulfilled and poured out for your righteousness,

you now take YOUR place at the unending feast of salvation.

So, welcome to the feast! Enjoy the wine -

Eat the good food your Lord has prepared -

Take your places at the side of your Bridegroom who has given His life for you,
that you may now stand spotless before Him.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.