

**The Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**January 17, 2016**

Two weeks ago we celebrated the Solemnity of the Epiphany. In the Roman rite of the Catholic Church we emphasize the visit of the Magi. But if you remember, the prayers for the Mass and Divine Office of the Epiphany point to more than the wise men's journey to Bethlehem.

For example the antiphon for the Canticle of Mary in the Liturgy of the Hours two weeks ago was: "Three mysteries mark this holy day: today the star leads the Magi to the infant Christ; today water is changed into wine for the wedding feast; today Christ wills to be baptized by John in the river Jordan to bring us salvation."

So last Sunday when we celebrated the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, we were actually celebrating the second of the three occurrences of the Epiphany. Today's gospel about the wedding feast at Cana provides us with a third epiphany, the changing of water into wine.

Remember that at this point in John's Gospel, Jesus had not yet performed any miracles.

Mary told Jesus that there was no wine. It's possible the wine shortage was due to Jesus bringing along his twelve probably very thirsty friends. But in any case, imagine the embarrassment of the groom's family that they could no longer provide for their guests. Jesus said to His mother, "How does this concern of yours effect me? My hour has not yet come."

But what Mary was presenting to Jesus would have a far deeper effect on the world than solving a simple matter of a lack of wine. If Jesus were to provide wine in a miraculous way, an inescapable path would open up that would lead to His passion,

death and resurrection, His hour.

But Mary told the servants of the wine steward to do whatever Jesus said. The hour, the time of the Lord, would begin with this epiphany, this manifestation of His power.

In this Epiphany, no one pointed to Jesus. He manifested His own glory. Jesus transformed the water into wine, and by doing so he foreshadowed the day when he would transform wine into His own blood.

The water in the jars that Jesus changed was probably water that was used for the purification rites. People needed to wash their hands and feet to be ready for the meal. Cups and plates and other vessels also needed to be washed in a very specific and ritualistic way.

So the deeper symbolism here is that this water which was meant for purification became wine that would later be used for the new purification rite, humanity's sharing in the eternal offering of Christ on the cross by drinking the Eucharistic blood of the Lord.

Today's gospel presents the extraordinary transformation of the world begun at Cana. And this transformation took place because people trusted in the Word of the Lord.

And that means that the purification from the evil of the world would progress from symbolic washing to sharing in the Blood of Christ, from water to wine to blood.

So when we receive Holy Communion we are participating in the transformation of the world. We experience a union with the crucified Savior whose blood has defeated the power of evil, not just in the world, but also in our lives.

So it's a really a good idea for us to seriously reflect on what we are doing when we come up to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. We must always guard against this extraordinary event ever becoming ordinary even if we receive communion every day.

Mary also helps us to understand the deeper meaning of the action Jesus takes as a result of her direct intercession. This wedding, with everything that it lacks, symbolizes the old covenant.

That first covenant, which focused on obedience to the Law, could only take the community so far, and then a new covenant in grace was revealed. Moses the Lawgiver stepped aside for Jesus the Bridegroom.

We all know that water keeps us alive, but love gives us life. We need water, but we also need the "new wine," a new view of God and the gift of God's unconditional love flowing in our lives and then over flowing into the lives of others.

Mary, always the compassionate mother, saw the couple's need and moved with confidence to meet it. That's why she is our model and inspiration. So as we prepare to receive her son in the Eucharist, it would be good to remember that her message to us is always and simply, "Do whatever he tells you." And as we heard in our second reading from St. Paul, we will always have the gifts of the Spirit to help us accomplish what he asks.