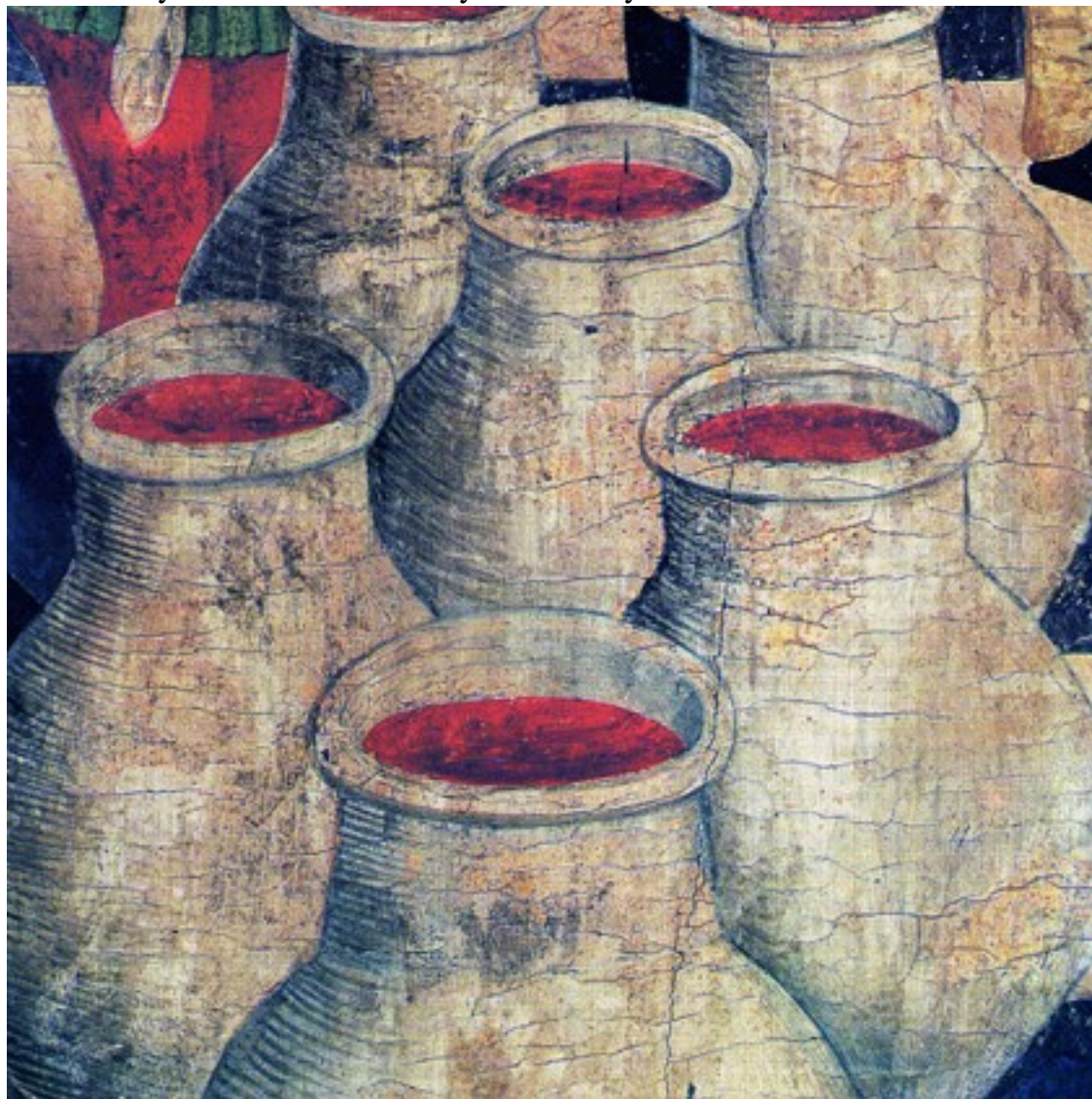


Commentary to the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time: Wedding at Cana

Commentary to the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time: From Water to Wine to Blood



Two weeks ago we celebrated the Solemnity of the Epiphany. In the Roman rite of the Catholic Church we emphasize the visit of the three wise men. But the prayers for the Mass and office of the Epiphany point to more than the wise men's journey to Bethlehem. For example the antiphon for Mary's Prayer 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 celebrating one of the three occurrences of the Epiphany. Today's gospel provides us with a third epiphany, the changing of water into wine. First of all, the setting: It's a wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. In the Gospel of John, where this passage is found, Jesus had not yet performed any miracles. Mary tells Jesus that there is no wine. That's probably because His disciples were there. Imagine the embarrassment of the groom's family that they could no longer provide for their guests. Jesus says to His mother, "How does this concern of yours effect me? My hour has not yet come." 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, a path would open up that would lead to His passion, death and resurrection, His hour.

But Mary tells the servants of the wine steward to do whatever Jesus says. The hour, the time of the

Lord, would begin with this epiphany, this manifestation of His power. In the first epiphany, the star and the magi pointed to Jesus as the King of Kings. In the second epiphany John the Baptist and the voice from heaven revealed Jesus to the world. In this Epiphany, no one points to Jesus. He manifests His glory. Jesus transforms the water into wine, by doing so he will soon transform wine into His blood. The water that Jesus changes is water that was used for purification rites. People needed to wash their hands and feet to be ready for the meal. Cups and plates and other vessels needed to be washed in a ritualistic way. But this water meant for purification becomes wine pointing to the wine that will later be used for the new purification rite, mankind'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. The transformation took place because people trusted in the Word of the Lord. The means for 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. When we receive communion we are participating in the transformation of the world. When we receive communion we are united to the One who died on the Cross for us. Every reception of the Eucharist is a union with the crucified Savior whose blood has defeated the power of evil, not just in the world, but also in our lives. All of us, myself included, need to reflect more on what we are doing when we come up to communion. We cannot allow this extraordinary event to become ordinary even if we receive communion every day. Mary has an instruction for us in this gospel passage. She tells the servants of the wine steward and she tells us to trust in Jesus' word. This a simple directive. Jesus has told us that we will never be alone. In the Gospel of Matthew he says that he will be with us always. Jesus has told us that God cares for each of us. In both Matthew and Luke we hear, "Are not sparrows sold for two pennies?"

Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. But even the hairs of your head are all counted. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. We need to listen to Mary and trust in the Lord. Yes, there are times that we feel alone. Henri Nouwen wrote that this was part of the human condition. The reality is that we are never alone. God knows. God cares. God is with us. We have to trust in his Word. The changing of the water into wine leads us to a consideration of the New World of Jesus Christ. This is a world where the ordinary becomes extraordinary. It is a world where simple people become great spiritual leaders. It is a world where the least important in society is raised up with dignity to become the most important in the Kingdom. "My soul magnifies the Lord, Mary proclaimed, "as a result, all generations will call me blessed. If we allow ourselves to magnify the Lord, to be epiphanies of the Lord, we also will be blessed. That is why we have to be careful that we don't get so bogged down with the sham events of our materialistically depraved world that we miss the really important events taking place. Look around. Children and Teens are proclaiming the presence of God.

Adults are reaching out to his presence in others. We are being enriched by his love in our families. For the Christian, the extraordinary is ordinary. It is quite normal for the water of the world to become the wine of Christ. The reading is telling us that we live in miraculous times. Jesus is transforming our world through the blood of his cross. Our society may glorify violence and have no respect for life. Violent video games, assault rifles, the degradation of women by the sex industry, as well as and particularly the Supreme Court's horrific Roe vs Wade decision, all can all lead us to be pessimistic for the future of our country and the world. But today's readings tell us that we don't need to be so negative.

There is no room for pessimism in Christianity. St. Paul said that Jesus Christ is not alternately "yes and "no, but only yes. (2 Cor 1:19). The miracle of Cana is an epiphany. The Savior of the World has come. Just as He transformed water into wine, and wine into blood, He is transforming our world into the Kingdom of God. We have been given the grace to be members of that Kingdom, and the mandate to bring the Good News of God, the Gospel, to the world.

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