

In the sermons and writings of the ancient Church Fathers there are numerous references to "the three epiphanies": the Epiphany of the Magi at Bethlehem, the Epiphany of the Baptism at the Jordan, and the Epiphany of the Marriage Feast at Cana.

The teaching of the Roman Catholic Catechism states,

“The great feast of Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (magi) from the East, together with his baptism in the Jordan and the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee.” (paragraph 528) ¹

Our Gospel reading today is the third of the three epiphanies. It is worth noting that the number three itself is important in the account.

But first it is important for us to root this miracle in the text of John’s Gospel.

Each of the Gospels, as you probably know, begins at a different point in time. Mark begins with Jesus as an adult beginning his ministry. Luke starts with the account of Jesus’ birth which parallels the Birth of John Baptist and Matthew begins by tracing the genealogy of Jesus going back all the way to Abraham through David. John’s Gospel, however, goes back even further, beginning with the theological and philosophical primordial existence of Jesus as the *Logos* of God before the creation.

Today’s reading, and indeed all that follows on from the first chapter of John, commonly called the “Prologue of John”, emphasises the cosmological significance of Jesus as the Christ, the pre-existent Word or *Logos* who was with God and is God. The God who spoke creation into being, who later leads the Magi by the star to the infant Jesus in the first epiphany, will speak through this third epiphany the Wedding at Cana.

From this we understand that the setting for Jesus’ first miracle is not only a wedding feast. It must be understood in continuity with this unfolding of the revelation of cosmic significance of Christ at the very centre of creation. As we find in the first chapter of John, “All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people” (John 1.3-5)

¹ <http://www.scborromeo.org/ccp/p122a3p3.htm#528>

This is much more than a wedding feast. It is the story of creation and its renewal that is symbolised in this mysterious banquet that only Jesus can bring to fulfilment. At the very beginning of chapter two John states that the feast is taking place on the third day, signalling the resurrected life. This feast is a new beginning. This is reinforced just a few verses later in John 2.19, when Jesus states that after clearing the temple, the sign of his authority will be revealed. "Destroy this temple, (he says) and in three days I will raise it up.

These three days again point to the resurrection of Christ, alluding to Jesus' resurrection and the authority that is found in him.

When Mary raises the issue that there is no more wine for the guests, it is also heavily symbolic. I am sure you know from past encounters with this text that wine would have been key to the celebration and to go without it means the banquet cannot properly proceed, the celebration would not be complete, the fellowship and sense of joy would not be fulfilled.

When Jesus refers to his mother as "woman", he is not challenging her, speaking flippantly and certainly not disrespecting her. It is much more than this, he is acknowledging her as the first above all women. In this reference he is turning our attention all the way back to the beginning of the story where the prologue of our Gospel begins - to creation, to the Genesis story.

In the Genesis account the first woman, Eve, is drawn from Adam's flesh and she will be the first to eat of the fruit which was forbidden, offering it to Adam.

In this exchange between Jesus and his mother we see a new kind of interaction between a woman and a man. This time the woman has not been brought into the world through the flesh of a man. This is a new creation story where God as man has been brought into the world through a woman.

This is a vision of restoration and the renewal of creation. Jesus is the new Adam, being summoned by a woman not to eat of the fruit forbidden in the Garden, but to restore the blessing of joy in new wine, which comes from new fruit grown on the new vine. Wine can be understood as the fullness of fruit, where fruit brought separation and division, this wine provides a new spirit and union that is being celebrated.

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This miracle taking place is an epiphany of a new creation symbolised in the wedding feast. It is a sign of the act of Jesus's restoration of creation to the fullness of life in the person of Jesus.

When Mary says to the servants to "Do whatever he tells you", her intervention recognises his authority, only the Master of the banquet would have the authority to give commands to the servants. Again, recall the prologue, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". Jesus is the master even though he appears as a guest.

The wedding couple is not named, no individuals are identified because the union here goes beyond any two people. It is a sign of God being reunited with humanity, with his creation in the form of a feast of celebration.

In this account of the wedding feast of Cana, we see a mysterious account of his whole life and ministry encapsulated in one miracle. This mystery finds its way into the sacramental life of the church. The master acknowledging the good wine saved until the end is the Father himself; the master referring to the good wine is referring to Jesus himself echoing the Father's words at Jesus' baptism "This is my son in whom I am well pleased". (Matt 3.17) The second of the three Epiphanies, the baptism of Jesus, was our reading last week. This message is later reinforced in the last chapter of John's Gospel, which begins with Jesus stating "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower." (John 15.1)

Jesus is the vine, which grows from the Father. The word was with God, the word was God, this is made possible through Jesus Christ. This vine promises to bear a new fruit, not one that separates us or cuts us off from God, but the fruit that comes from the vine of Christ which is the source of the good wine that draws us into his divine life.

Jesus' miracle at the wedding feast in Cana is a sign of an epiphany of renewal and a restoration of creation back to union with God. Taking place on the third day, through the power of his life, death and resurrection. The good wine is Jesus himself who restores life, joy and fellowship to the feast that initially seems unable to continue. This good wine comes into the world through a woman who has brought her son to the feast. He will renew and restore creation as a banquet where we are invited as guests.

The wedding banquet is a sign pointing toward our union to God through his Son. The Eucharist itself, and I hope you can see this connection – is an expression of this miracle because it testifies to the mystery of re-union with

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God. Creation's restoration is a banquet feast that nourishes with the body and blood of Christ, the Vine which bears fruit offers joy and gives us life in the celebration of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.