

# Jesus and the Wedding Feast at Cana



<sup>1</sup>On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. <sup>2</sup>Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup>When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." <sup>4</sup>[And] Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." <sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you." <sup>6</sup>Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. <sup>7</sup>Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. <sup>8</sup>Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it. <sup>9</sup>And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom <sup>10</sup>and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now." <sup>11</sup>Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him. (John 2:1-11)

## History of the Franciscan Wedding Church

History records that the Empress Helena built a church in the 4<sup>th</sup> century to commemorate the site where Jesus performed His first miracle. The church was eventually lost, either having been destroyed or fell into such disrepair that it was no longer recognizable. Perhaps the earliest recorded accounts of this church was written by a pilgrim in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, who described visiting the place where Jesus performed His first miracle:

"(Having left Sephoris) after three miles we came to Cana, where the Lord attended a marriage; and we sat on the same seat; unworthy though I am, I wrote there the names of my parents... Two jars remain. I filled one with wine, carried it on my shoulders and offered it at the altar. We piously washed ourselves in that very fountain. Then we went to the city of Nazareth."

The exact location of the town of Cana is still in dispute, however the majority of scholars agree on the likelihood of *Kafr Kanna* (5km north-east of Nazareth on the road to Tiberias) as being the town in which Mary and Jesus attended the wedding feast, and the location of the church built by the Empress Helena. The land of *Kafr Kanna* was sold by the Lord of Sidon to the Knights Hospitallers in 1254. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Franciscans established a monastery in the area and brought pilgrims to the ruins of an old building which they believed to be the original church built under the direction of the Empress. In 1879 the Franciscans started building a new church over the ruins, and it was completed and consecrated in 1883.



Recent archeological excavations underneath the new church, the Wedding Church of Cana, suggested that the ruins are indeed the remains of the original Byzantine era church. A fragment of mosaic was uncovered underneath the floor of the Nave of the current church which dates back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. The mosaic was written in Aramaic and read:

*"Blessed be the memory of Joseph son of Talhum son of Butah and his sons, who made this picture (mosaic). Blessings be upon them."*

Archeologists believe that this mosaic was part of flooring of a synagogue that existed prior to the Byzantine era church adding further credence to this site having been the location of the Marriage Feast of Cana. It is also possible that early Jewish-Christians worshipped at this synagogue and venerated this site.

Pilgrims may travel underneath the Franciscan Wedding Church to observe some of the additional artifacts that have been uncovered during recent excavations. One can see the remains of what is believed to be 1<sup>st</sup> century dwellings, three apses from the Byzantine era church, fragments of jars, and large stone cisterns which held water possibly used for Jewish purification ceremonies (*mikveh*). Tradition holds that one of the large cisterns/jars held water that had been transformed into wine by Jesus.





Water vessel for Jewish ceremonial washing and purification believed to have contained water which had been changed into wine by our Lord during the Wedding Feast in Cana



View from underneath the Wedding Church of Cana which shows excavation of 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish structures and dwellings.



Fragment of Mosaic from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century synagogue possible used by Jewish-Christians.

## Mass & Renewal of Marriage Vows

### Procession:

I did a bit of research regarding the renewal of Catholic wedding vows and found out that there is some controversy regarding this practice. It is a relatively new phenomenon within the Church and there has been some opposition to it for the reason that a vow that is made with the provision of “until death do us part” is a permanent vow and is not subjective, therefore, for renewal. All of this said, general renewal of vows is only done to celebrate milestones, such as major anniversaries, and an opportunity for the couple to make a public witness to the love and commitment that they continue to dedicate to one another. And in the case of the Renewal of Marriage Vows at the site of Jesus’ first miracle at the Wedding Feast of Cana how could one not want to participate in this ceremony and to receive the blessings and graces associated with the extraordinary opportunity.



Procession of the couples renewing their wedding vows at the Franciscan Wedding Church at Cana

## Liturgy of the Word:



### Old Testament Reading

<sup>18</sup>The LORD God said: *It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suited to him.* <sup>19</sup>So the LORD God formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the air, and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them; whatever the man called each living creature was then its name. <sup>20</sup>The man gave names to all the tame animals, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals; but none proved to be a helper suited to the man.

<sup>21</sup>So the LORD God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup>The LORD God then built the rib that he had taken from the man into a woman. When he brought her to the man, <sup>23</sup>the man said:

*“This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; This one shall be called ‘woman,’ for out of man this one has been taken.”*

<sup>24</sup>That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body. (Gen 2:18-24)

### Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 30

<sup>1</sup>A psalm. A song for the dedication of the Temple. Of David.

<sup>2</sup>I praise you, LORD, for you raised me up  
and did not let my enemies rejoice over me.

<sup>3</sup>O LORD, my God,  
I cried out to you for help and you healed me.

<sup>4</sup>LORD, you brought my soul up from Sheol;  
you let me live, from going down to the pit.

<sup>5</sup>Sing praise to the LORD, you faithful;  
give thanks to his holy memory.

<sup>6</sup>For his anger lasts but a moment;  
his favor a lifetime.

At dusk weeping comes for the night;  
but at dawn there is rejoicing.

<sup>7</sup>Complacent, I once said,  
“I shall never be shaken.”

<sup>8</sup>LORD, you showed me favor,  
established for me mountains of virtue.

But when you hid your face  
I was struck with terror.

<sup>9</sup>To you, LORD, I cried out;  
with the Lord I pleaded for mercy:

<sup>10</sup>“What gain is there from my lifeblood,  
from my going down to the grave?

Does dust give you thanks  
or declare your faithfulness?

<sup>11</sup>Hear, O LORD, have mercy on me;  
LORD, be my helper.”

<sup>12</sup>You changed my mourning into dancing;  
you took off my sackcloth  
and clothed me with gladness.

<sup>13</sup>So that my glory may praise you  
and not be silent.

O LORD, my God,  
forever will I give you thanks.

## Epistle:

<sup>21</sup> Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

<sup>22</sup> Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord.

<sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

<sup>24</sup> As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup> Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, <sup>30</sup> because we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the church; <sup>33</sup> however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Eph 5:21-33)



## Gospel:



<sup>1</sup> On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. <sup>2</sup> Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup> When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." <sup>4</sup> [And] Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." <sup>5</sup> His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you." <sup>6</sup> Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. <sup>7</sup> Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. <sup>8</sup> Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it. <sup>9</sup> And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom <sup>10</sup> and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept

the good wine until now." <sup>11</sup> Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him. (John 2:1-11)

## Homily:

"Do whatever He tells you." Jesus obeyed and it opened windows, doors, and avenues of opportunity that enabled Jesus to perform His first miracle. Underneath the altar is where the actual banquet took place. The beauty of married life is not only does it enrich the world but enriches the Church because of the children it brings forth. That's why marriage is a sacrament that God has given humankind to propagate and fills us with the goodness of God's love through offspring. Unlike now where marriage is being redefined. A lot of our words are being redefined, like *he*, *she*, or *it*. But marriage is between a man and a woman regardless of how you see it, because from the man and the woman comes the fruit of their love.

Had it not been for the love of our parents we wouldn't be in existence sitting in these pews right now. We are made out of love that has brought us here now and it will bring us to the end. So for the couples renewing your vows today I want you to mean what you say and say what you mean. Pray for these couples here who are celebrating this wonderful gift of marriage that God may help them bear fruit in their lives and that God may enrich them. And that these couples never forget that God is the source of everything that you are and you only become successful because of your faith in God who has brought you together in your married life.

### Renewal of Our Wedding Vows:

Father Joel: "Jan and Kevin, do you reaffirm your wedding vows to each other once again and promise to love each other in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, for better or worse, all the days of your life?"



Jan and Kevin: "We do."  
Father Joel: "Then sign this covenant with a kiss."

### Liturgy of the Eucharist:



Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life.



By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.



Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you: fruit of the vine and work of human hands it will become our spiritual drink.



Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

**The Lord be with you.**  
And with your spirit.  
**Lift up your hearts.**  
We lift them up to the Lord.  
**Let us give thanks to the Lord our God**  
It is right and just.





Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my BODY, which will be given up for you.



Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the Chalice of My BLOOD, the BLOOD of the new and eternal Covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in Memory of Me.



Through him, and with him, and in him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, for ever and ever.



Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.



Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.



Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed



May the almighty God bless you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Thanks be to God.



THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK  
OF THE SUPERIOR COURT

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OF THE SUPERIOR COURT

In the Name of Our Lord, Amen  
**McMahon**

**KEVIN**



**JANISE**

Let the Blessing Be  
Given to the  
Couple

**A. J. Gail**

**06/23/2018**

**06/23/2018**



## Kevin's Reflections

### The Centrality of Marriage in the Gospels

<sup>1</sup>On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. <sup>2</sup>Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding (John 2:1-2)

Was it a happenstance that Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding? The Church Fathers did not think so. Saint Bede articulates this understanding of the miracle of the Wedding Feast of Cana as follows:

*"It is not devoid of mystical meaning that the marriage is reported to have taken place on the third day.... This indicates that the Lord came to link the church to Himself during the third age. Indeed, the first age shone brightly in the world with the examples of the patriarchs before the law, the second with the writings of the prophets under the law, the third with the proclamation of the evangelists in the time of grace, as if by the light of the third day.... The Bridegroom is Christ, the Bride is the Church.... It was not by chance, but for the sake of a certain mystical meaning, that He came to a marriage celebrated on earth in the customary fleshly way, since He descended from heaven to earth in order to connect the Church to Himself in spiritual love. His nuptial chamber was the womb of His incorrupt Mother, where God was joined with human nature, and from there He came forth like a bridegroom to join the Church to Himself."* (Homily 1.14, After the Epiphany, *Homilies on the Gospel*)



Newlyweds, Kevin and Jan McMahon  
November 25, 1979

At the mass we celebrated at the Wedding Church at Cana we read how Saint Paul declared that it was a "great mystery" that the marriage of a man and a woman was a type of the relationship between Christ and the Church:

<sup>29</sup>For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, <sup>30</sup>because we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup>"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." <sup>32</sup>This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the church, <sup>33</sup>however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Eph 5:29-33)

Since our baptism to this very moment we have been living in the "third day." What does it mean to live in the "third day?" Our baptism was the marriage "arrangement" (in Hebrew: *Shiddukhin*) to Christ, and for those of us who were baptized as infants our parents made the arrangement for us. In either case our Lord and Savior paid the bride price for us (*ketubah*) through the mystery of His death and resurrection.

Do you remember your first Holy Communion? I can still remember mine as a second grader at Saint Patrick's. I was dressed up in a little suit, and the girls in my class wore frilly white dresses. Why? Because when we received Holy Communion we were becoming betrothed to our Lord. The Mass (the Divine Liturgy in the East) is in fact a betrothal ceremony (in Hebrew: *Eyrusin*). When we get to the "Upper Room" where the first betrothal ceremony was performed at the Last Supper we will discuss this in more detail. It is, as Saint Paul said, a "Great Mystery," as the entirety of the Gospels can be understood in the context of God marrying His People. What could be more beautiful?

### The Woman

<sup>3</sup>When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." <sup>4</sup>[And] Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." <sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you." (John 2:3-5)

No, this is not about Irene Adler from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Scandal in Bohemia*, whom Sherlock Holmes described as "the woman." No, I am talking about *the* woman, Mary the mother of Jesus. I've always found it a bit odd that Jesus called His mother, "woman." It seems so formal, indifferent, perhaps even disrespectful, but that, of course, cannot be. It was this *woman* who said to the angel Gabriel, "Be it done unto me according to thy word,"

thus giving Him her womb to come into this world. It was this *woman* who presented Him to Simeon and Anna in the temple and who received the prophecy that a sword would pierce her own soul revealing the hearts of many. It was this *woman* who fled to Egypt with Him thus protecting Him from Herod's soldiers. It was this *woman* who searched for Jesus and found Him in the temple. And it was this *woman* to whom the Spirit had instructed Him to be obedient to so that He might grow in wisdom and stature, and in favor before of God and man. But, Jesus was now in transition. He had been baptized by John in the Jordan, He had been driven into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, and He was just beginning to gather around Himself disciples. His public ministry was at hand, and He would only do what He saw His Father doing. Now, unexpectedly His mother brings a problem to His attention.

*"They have no wine,"* she told her son.

I'd like to bring the reader's attention to the icon of the Wedding Feast at Cana that can be found at the beginning of this Photo-Journal entry; I've included a detail of the image here. I'd also like to remind the reader that in the Eastern tradition icons are not "painted" they are "written," because they are seen as an extension of the revelation written in the Gospels.

Note how Mary approaches her Son. Her head is bowed; her left hand is placed over her chest in humble deference while her hand gently touches her Son's shoulder in the loving familiarity of a mother. In this posture Mary pleads her case before her Son. Jesus turns towards His mother, but does not face her fully. Why?— because He is also and always facing His Father. Yet, He listens and then responds:



*"Woman, how does your concern affect me?"*

How would we respond if Jesus replied to us in that manner? Would we whimper off, and apologize for bothering Him? Mary's response reminds me of the story of the Canaanite woman:

<sup>21</sup> Then Jesus went from that place and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup> And behold, a Canaanite woman of that district came and called out, "Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is tormented by a demon." <sup>23</sup> But he did not say a word in answer to her. His disciples came and asked him, "Send her away, for she keeps calling out after us." <sup>24</sup> He said in reply, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." <sup>25</sup> But the woman came and did him homage, saying, "Lord, help me." <sup>26</sup> He said in reply, "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs." <sup>27</sup> She said, "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters." <sup>28</sup> Then Jesus said to her in reply, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed from that hour. (Matt 15:21-28)

Jesus' seeming reluctance to address His mother's concern, I believe, is to challenge her to enter into a new level of faith, the faith that will be required of her as He enters His public ministry. I love Mary's response. She didn't react; she didn't back off or get defensive. In fact, Mary gives the perfect response, not to her Son, but to the stewards:

*"Do whatever he tells you."*

This response launches Jesus into His public ministry. With these five words Mary gives Jesus to the world, and she gives the world to her Son. Mary takes Jesus' challenge to her (Woman, how does your concern affect me?), turns it around so that it challenges the world and her Son. "Do whatever he tells you," Mary tells, not just the stewards, but all those that will hear His word throughout the ages. And to her Son, she is saying, "Speak now, the world is listening." In her response Mary reached into that new level of faith and became the mother of all those who have done, continue to do, and will do in the future "whatever he tells us."

Mary is the woman, standing at the foot of the cross, to whom Jesus spoke when His time had indeed come:

<sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" <sup>27</sup> Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. (John 19:26-27)

And who is the disciple that Jesus loved? John, of course, but John also represents all those believers who "do whatever He tells" them. Thus, while on the cross Jesus establishes His mother as our mother, and Mother of the Church. She is *the* Woman of the protoevangelium of Genesis, *the* Woman of the Marriage Feast of Cana, *the* Woman at the foot of the Cross, and *the* Woman Jesus has given to us as our spiritual Mother.

I am grateful to belong to a Christian tradition that acknowledges Mary, the Mother of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as an integral part of our spiritual and temporal lives. It is nice to know that I can go to her in times of need and that she may lay her hand on the shoulder of her Son, and whisper in His ear, “*Kevin has no....*”

## **Water and Wine and Blood**

<sup>7</sup> Jesus told them, “Fill the jars with water.” So they filled them to the brim. <sup>8</sup> Then he told them, “Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.” So they took it. <sup>9</sup> And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom <sup>10</sup> and said to him, “Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now.” (John 2:7-10)

Why water into wine? There could have been any number of different miracles that Jesus could have performed that might have been an even more dramatic start to His ministry. May he heal someone? How about raise one of the guests from the dead who choked on a piece of meat during the feast? Seriously though, was there something special about water and wine? To answer this question we need to discuss not just water and wine, but water, wine, and blood.

Let’s start with water. Water is very important; it is necessary to sustain life. To the Jewish people it was and continues to be a necessary part of their purification ceremonies. This goes back to the days of Noah when God cleansed the world of the sin of the “sons of God” (fallen angels) through the flood (see Genesis 6). It also goes back to when the children of Israel crossed through the Jordan into the Promised Land. They incorporated ritual washing with water in virtually all religious ceremonies such as the *mikvah* performed during the betrothal and wedding ceremonies. No doubt some of the jars of water that were present at the Wedding Feast at Cana were there for purification purposes. Christianity kept many of these water traditions as it emerged from Judaism including baptism, and holy water which Catholics use to cross themselves when they enter a church.

Wine was also ritualized in Jewish religious ceremonies. Four cups of wine are served during the Passover meal. In the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony a cup of wine would be shared between the bridegroom and the bride. This was done twice, once during the betrothal and again at the wedding ceremony. The wine that the couple drank, actually that everyone drank in the Jewish community, was mixed with water; this was called “mixed wine.” Typically wine was made as a concentrate and to make it more palatable (and less alcoholic) water was mixed with it.

Now let’s talk about blood. You might wonder why I am bring up blood since there is no mention of blood in the story of the Marriage Feast at Cana, but trust me it is all interconnected with the overarching narrative of the Gospels. Blood is also very important in both the Old and New Testaments. The drinking of blood was prohibited in the Old Testament. In Genesis chapter nine God instructs Noah not to consume meat that still has the blood of the animal in it:

<sup>3</sup> Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. <sup>4</sup> Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. (Gen 9:3-4)

The reason for this prohibition is explained in Leviticus chapter seventeen:

<sup>14</sup> “For the life of every creature is the blood of it; therefore I have said to the people of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off. (Lev 17:14)

Throughout history there have been pagan rituals that involved the drinking of animal and even human blood. It was the belief of the people who practiced such rituals that the life force (nature, strength) of the animal or human could be transferred through the drinking of the victim’s blood; in effect the imbiber would become *like* the creature whose blood they drank. God prohibited these practices because His people would draw their life force from their Creator. Although blood was prohibited from being consumed it was none the less used extensively in Jewish ritual going all the way back to Abel who sacrificed lambs from his flock in the worship of God. The lamb’s blood that was slain in the original Passover was spread on the doorpost and lintel to protect the Israelites from the Angel of Death. The Covenant of Sinai was sealed with the blood of bulls, which was splashed upon the altar and upon the people.

How does this water, wine, and blood come together? They come together in the Mass. What, one may ask, does this have to do with the Marriage Feast of Cana? Everything! Jesus’ public ministry is bookended (in His First Coming) by the Marriage Feast of Cana and the Betrothal Feast in the Upper Room, the Last Supper, from which the Church received the Mass (or Divine Liturgy in the East). This latter bookend we will discuss when we get to the site of the Upper Room, for now let’s look at the Mass in the context of water, wine, and blood.

Pictures (and captions) from the Mass we celebrated at the Wedding Church in Cana can be referenced for this discussion of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The gifts of Bread and Wine are brought to the altar and blessed by the priest. Then something extraordinarily important happens that often goes unnoticed by most Catholics. The priest adds a small amount of water to the wine in the chalice. This is a ritual that has been practiced since the earliest days of the Church; Justine Martyr mentions the “mixed cup” as early as 150 AD. The Church though, while acknowledging the tradition of mixing water and wine, also believe that the act had powerful spiritual significance:

*“The water is understood as the people while the wine shows forth the blood of Christ. When the water is mingled in the cup with wine, the people are united with Christ.... Once the water and wine are mingled in the Lord’s cup, the mixture cannot anymore be separated.”* (St. Clement of Alexandria)

Where else do we see a mixture that “cannot anymore be separated?” That right, in the marriage of a man and a woman.

<sup>3</sup> *Some Pharisees approached him, and tested him, saying, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?”* <sup>4</sup> *He said in reply, “Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’* <sup>5</sup> *and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?* <sup>6</sup> *So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.”* (Matt 19:3-6)

The mixing of water and wine demonstrates that the Mass is indeed a celebration of the betrothal of the Bridegroom, Christ, with the Bride, the Church. The two become One—a “great mystery” as Paul describes it in Ephesians. But how can Christ, the Holy, Mighty, and Immortal God, become *one* with that which is profane, weak, and temporal? The answer is simple, we must become *like* Him:

*And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being **changed into his likeness** from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* (2Cor 3:18; emphasis added)

When can we behold the glory of the Lord? We can behold the glory of the Lord at Mass in the hearing of the Liturgy of the Word, the participation of the Liturgy of the Eucharist and the reception of our Bridegroom’s Body and Blood. Can this really change us “into His likeness?” Yes, it can; the priest says as much while mixing the water and the wine:

*By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.*

But there is another crucial step, and that is the consecration of the bread and the wine (mixed with water):

*Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my BODY, which will be given up for you.*

*Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the Chalice of My BLOOD, the BLOOD of the new and eternal Covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in Memory of Me.*

Most Protestants believe that the Eucharist is a symbolic act of remembrance, but for Catholics and Orthodox the Bread and the Wine *are indeed* the Flesh and Blood of Jesus Christ:

<sup>52</sup> *The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”* <sup>53</sup> *So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; <sup>54</sup> he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh is **food indeed**, and my blood is **drink indeed**.”* (John 6:52-55; emphasis added)

And this food has the ability to change us, that is, to make us *like* Him. Let’s take a moment and talk about this. When we eat ordinary food, our bodies break it down into its basic molecules which we then reassemble to make us (tissues, enzymes, hormones, etc) according to our own unique DNA. When we consume the Blood and Wine of the Eucharist it breaks us down and reassemble us into a new creation so that we might “share in the divinity of Christ.” Or, in the words of the scripture, *for the life of every creature is its blood*, and this *life* and this *water, wine, and blood* is Jesus Christ.

<sup>20</sup> *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* (Gal 2:20)

We could call the Eucharist the sacrament of *Abiding*:

<sup>56</sup> ***He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.*** <sup>57</sup> *As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.* (John 6:52-57; emphasis added)

And we know that if we abide in Him we will be *like Him*:

<sup>16</sup> *So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.* <sup>17</sup> *In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because **as he is so are we in this world.*** (1John 4:16-17; emphasis added)

I want this life in Christ. I want my life to be a manifestation of *as He is so am I in this world*. I wonder at times why we are not more *like Him*. We have so much available to us in the way of sanctifying graces. There is a power available to the Church through the Holy Spirit—the power to transform our lives. It is as though we are holding on to wires with a 100,000 volts that is covered with thick insulation so that I just feel a little tingle from the current surging within it. I want to “feel” the full force of the word and Eucharist. I want to strip off the insulation and grab onto the bare wire. Perhaps a more scripturally way to say it is I want to “behold the glory of the Lord” with an “unveiled face.” As John said,

*Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* (1John 3:2; emphasis added)

I want the veil off. I want to see Him as He is, to know Him and the power of His resurrection (Phil 3:10) with the insulation stripped away so that I can experience the full force of God’s grace in my life. I want to be *like Him*. I don’t want this just in the “sweet-bye-and-bye,” but now, in this world—at church, in the shopping mall, and in my home. Lord, lift the veil off your Bride, abide with us for You are our hope of glory. (Col 1:27)

### **Jan’s Reflection:**

After reflecting on the many miracles of Jesus I recognize that the wedding at Cana is not like any of the other miracles He performed. It is not an accident that this miracle’s setting is a wedding. Jesus attendance at the wedding highlights the joy of the sacrament of marriage and prefigures the marriage feast in Heaven at His Second Coming.

Mary plays a major role when she tells her son, “They have no wine.” Wine is symbolic of life. Is Mary hinting at the lack of something more than just the physical wine? When Jesus turns water into wine it is transformed into a superior wine of great quality and great abundance. What a gift! The new wine is not just a manifestation of His glory to His disciples, but symbolizes the marriage of the Bride (the Church) to the Bridegroom. Jesus has transformed the ordinary water of institutionalized marriage into the wine of the Kingdom in a Christ centered marriage that will endure throughout eternity.

The Wedding at Cana of Galilee provided the perfect atmosphere for the Lord to introduce us to what awaits us in the marriage feast in Heaven. His blood being the good wine that He will shed on the cross and the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper.

I will be thinking of all that the Lord has done for us in this miracle every time I receive the Eucharist.