

Closing Prayer

O God,
teach us the hidden wisdom of the gospel,
so that we may hunger and thirst for holiness,
work tirelessly for peace,
and be counted among those
who seek first the blessedness of your kingdom.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers · Ordinary Time, Week 4, Year A²

CPL • LBC Year A Epiphany 4.odt • 2022-11-01

² *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary* / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.

The Fourth Sunday of Epiphany

*Sunday between 28 January and 1 February inclusive ·
Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Principal Service readings

1 Kings 17.8-16	The widow of Zarephath feeds Elijah
Psalms 36.5-10	With the Lord is the fountain of life
1 Corinthians 1.18-31	God chose the foolish to shame the wise
John 2.1-11	Jesus turns water into wine

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

Jesus turns water into wine

¹On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' ⁴And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' ⁵His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' ⁶Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. ⁹When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, ¹⁰'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' ¹¹Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

John 2.1-11 NRSV¹

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Comments and Questions

The 'third day' (2.1): In the Jewish celebration of Pentecost, following the account of Exodus 19.16, on the third day the glory of God is revealed in the gift of the Law (cf.2.11).

In this story the mother of Jesus enters (2.1) as well as the disciples of Jesus (2.2), and several participants in the wedding feast – servants (2.5), the steward (2.8), the bridegroom (2.9), Jesus' brothers (2.12).

The narrator links the second Cana miracle (4.43-54) with the story of Jesus' first visit. The account of the second Cana visit begins: 'Then he came again to Cana in Galilee where he had changed the water into wine' (4.46). Later, the narrator comments: 'Now this was the second sign that Jesus did after coming from Judea to Galilee' (4.54). The stories between these two points seem then, to fit this frame and perspective.

The narrative of 2.1-11 is full of Johannine symbolism: the 'hour' (2.4), the idea of a 'sign' (2.11), the theme of water, the wedding celebration, the revelation of glory (2.11).

The singling out of the mother of Jesus early on (2.1) indicates that she might have an important part to play. She draws Jesus' attention to something the narrator has already commented on, that 'they have no wine' (2.3). Jesus' retort (2.4) is quite abrupt, not what one would expect of a son to a mother. Also, Jesus calls her 'woman' rather than 'mother'. Is he putting a distance between himself and his mother, or is his use of the word 'mother' indicating to the woman of Genesis and establishing her as an icon of the church? Jesus then makes a statement about the 'hour': 'My hour has not yet come' (2.4). Perhaps he feels he is being pushed into taking action.

Equally surprising is his mother's response, as she tells the servants: 'Do whatever he tells you' (2.5). Does this indicate her absolute trust in Jesus, or that she is still outside that inner relationship between Jesus and the Father? Her brief appearance at the beginning of the story sets off a train of events that results in the miracle (2.8-10).

The transformation of water into wine is not reported. Then Jesus issues instructions about what to do with it (2.8). The bridegroom is asked to explain the strange appearance of good wine so late in the day.

The concluding verse (2.11) reflects on the story and discerns that Jesus' glory has been revealed and that his disciples believed in him.

Quotations

1

We take for granted the slow miracle whereby water in the irrigation of a vineyard becomes wine, it is only when Christ turns water into wine, in a quick motion, as it were, that we stand amazed.

Saint Augustine of Hippo, 354–430

2

This entire pericope is about the formation of a new community. Jesus performed signs at the behest of God. He demonstrated how his gift of new life fulfilled all they had once known and believed. Those who saw and believed with eyes of faith were called into community to share Jesus' new life.

Word and worship workbook for year C / Mary Birmingham. 1998

3

They didn't have to describe Jesus to me for me to know he's black. Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine at a wedding. Now if that ain't black folk, I don't know what is.

D. L. Hughley, 1963–

Related topics

For further study:

Christology; revelation; New Covenant / Old Covenant; church; Mary as icon of church