

Closing Prayer

God of wonders,
at Cana in Galilee
you revealed your glory in Jesus Christ
and summoned all humanity
to life in him.

Show to your people gathered on this day
your transforming power
and give us a foretaste
of the wine you keep
for the age to come.

We make our prayer 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 2, Year C²

CPL • LBC Year C Epiphany 2.odt • 2022-01-07

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 Second Sunday of Epiphany

Sunday between 14 and 20 January inclusive

Principal Service readings

Isaiah 62.1-5	Prophecy of splendour for Jerusalem
Psalms 36.5-10	In God's light we see light
1 Corinthians 12.1-11	Varieties of spiritual gifts but the same spirit
John 2.1-11	The wedding at Cana in Galilee – Jesus' first miracle

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

The wedding at Cana

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 action of the narrative is framed by the movement of characters in the story – Jesus, his mother and the disciples. Within this frame, where people move from one place to another two exchanges lead to action, one initiated by the mother of Jesus (2.3-5) and one by Jesus (3.7-10). Finally, the narrator comments on the significance of the event (2.11).

The ‘third day’ refers to three days after the meeting with Philip and Nathanael. The opening events of the gospel are contained within one week of which almost every day is noticed (1.29, 35, 41, 43, 2.1). The setting of the marriage feast summons up biblical images of the messianic era (cf. Hosea 2.19-20; Isaiah 25.6-8; Jeremiah 2.2; Song of Songs). The first character introduced is the mother of Jesus (2.1), indicating that she may have an important part to play in the narrative. She is present when Jesus first reveals his glory (2.11) and she is also present at the cross (19.25-27). Jesus’ mother initiates action with her statement, ‘They have no wine’ (2.3). Jesus replies with a sharp response: ‘Woman, what have you to do with me?’ (2.4) There have been attempts made to soften this response, but it is not the sort of reply one would expect from a son to a mother. Jesus puts distance between himself and his mother. Then he makes a statement that indicates that his life is marked by a sequence of events leading to an ‘hour’: ‘my hour has not yet come’ (2.4). This is the first reference to a theme that will unfold as the story progresses. For now, it introduces an element of tension.

Surprisingly, having been rebuked, Jesus’ mother then goes on to say: ‘Do whatever he tells you’ (2.5). This seems to indicate that, far from accepting the rebuke, she does know something of God’s plan, perhaps the ‘anything’ is just indicative of trust. She is the first person to show unconditional trust.

The scene is set for the action initiated by Jesus. The stone jars are mentioned – six is one short of the number of perfection, seven (2.6). The transformation of water into wine is not reported, but the mother’s command to do *whatever* he tells them is being followed. The steward now tastes the water that has become wine, but doesn’t know where it comes from, though the servants do (2.9). It can be seen that the ‘word’ of Jesus is an important theme here. The bridegroom is summoned for

an explanation (2.10). He is told he has kept the good wine ‘until now’ (2.10). Jesus had announced that his hour had not yet come, but this at least is a stage on the journey to that hour. Finally, we are given the narrator’s comment that Jesus ‘revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him’ (2.11). There is tension between the ‘not yet’ of Jesus’ ‘hour’ and the ‘now’ of the miracle story. Jesus’ glory is revealed and the disciples believe in him. It is a beginning.

Quotations

1

God creates the vine and teaches it to draw up water by its roots and, with the aid of the sun, to turn that water into a juice which will ferment and take on certain qualities. Thus every year, from Noah’s time till ours, God turns water into wine. That, men fail to see. Either like the Pagans they refer the process to some finite spirit, Bacchus or Dionysus: or else, like the moderns, they attribute real and ultimate causality to the chemical and other material phenomena which are all that our senses can discover in it. But when Christ at Cana makes water into wine, the mask is off’ (John 5:19). The miracle has only half its effect if it only convinces us that Christ is God: it will have its full effect if whenever we see a vineyard or drink a glass of wine we remember that here works He who sat at the wedding party in Cana.

“Miracles,” *God in the Dock* / C. S. Lewis. 1970

2

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

Related topics

For further study:

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