

EPIPHANY III 2012
SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH
FATHER JOHN ALTBERG

JOHN 2.1

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NAZARETH CARPENTER CAPTIVATES WEDDING CROWD! THIS MIGHT WELL HAVE BEEN HEADLINE NEWS IN THE NEXT DAY'S **CANA CHRONICLE**...THE STORY OF JESUS TURNING WATER INTO WINE MADE QUITE AN IMPACT.

Today's Gospel recounts one of the best known appearances of Jesus...so well known, in fact, that people who don't even know where to FIND a church commonly make reference to "turning water into wine"

Let's examine what happened that day... consider it in the context of what happened then and where WE see Jesus in action today in public settings and our personal lives. This story is about Jesus **taking action** and making **changes**...

Consider first the chronology of the event...St John's told us in last Sunday's Gospel about the Baptism of Jesus – ultimately word spread that this was no ordinary person...John (the Baptist) had talked about seeing the dove when he baptized Jesus and Jesus had begun assembling a group of people who became his followers...disciples Peter, his brother Andrew, Phillip and Nathaniel. Nathaniel... the one who had a few questions about whether anyone from a backwater place like Nazareth could possibly have any credibility!

Two days later we find Jesus, his mother, Mary and some of his friends (disciples) at a wedding in the village of Cana, about ten miles NW of Nazareth. They had underestimated the size or consumption capability of the reception crowd and ran out of wine...big problem...no wine shop in the neighborhood!

What happened next is only too typical...Mary, the Jewish mother says, "Don't worry, my son will take care of this"...Jesus tries to dial back her enthusiasm..."Mother, this is not the time for this"...Mary persists and tells the caterers "Just do what he says." You know the rest of the story...Jesus tells them to fill six pots with water...you can imagine their saying "what's this all about"... nonetheless, they do what Jesus says..."now take some to the man in charge"...

Having no clue where they came up with more wine the bride's father tastes it and says 'this is amazing...most people serve the good wine first and then switch to the cheap stuff...you saved the best until last!

The catering staff and the disciples saw what had happened and began to suspect that this fellow Jesus from Nazareth was no 'ordinary' guest! They began to understand that there was something extraordinary about Jesus and what he could do.

There are two key points surrounding that day

- First, it was a wedding...Jesus could have chosen any event for his first miracle, his first public appearance, but it is significant that he chose a wedding. In so doing Jesus dramatically augmented the importance of marriage...something I regularly highlight in wedding homilies as husband and wife prepare to receive Jesus in the Sacrament of Holy Communion and commence their new life together in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

One cannot help[but speculate that Jesus might have become something of a sought after wedding guest...

Hymn 207 provides a perfect explanation the eventual 'guest' evolution as we sing...*Come risen Lord and deign to be our guest...let us now instead be guests at your table*...

And so we are...right here...today...

- Second...the comment of the bride's father... "Things HAVE changed...you saved the best until last"...that is a significant observation for that's the way it works with God...the last part is the best part!

Assuredly not predictable is this year's Epiphany Season having Requiem Masses for two beloved parishioners as bookends for this Sunday...sobering as these events are for us, they do call to our attention the hope and expectation that two dear friends now enter into the state of perpetual light.

The servants and friends of Jesus at that marriage feast saw and understood what had happened...where have WE seen this also...?

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