

Water, Wine and Us

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany, Year C, RCL. John 2:1-11 (The Wedding Feast at Cana). January 17, 2016. The Episcopal Shared Ministry of Our Saviour, Salem and Trinity, Alliance in the Diocese of Ohio. The Rev'd Jerome H. (Kip) Colegrove.

Last Wednesday the discussion group at Trinity talked for an hour about the story of Jesus at the wedding feast, which is today's Gospel reading. This story is so rich in meaning that we barely had time to say enough about it. Since we don't have an hour for this homily I'm going to focus on one aspect of Jesus' participation in the wedding at Cana in Galilee.

Jesus' ministry is just getting going. He has been baptized and acquired his first disciples. He and his family have been invited to a wedding in Cana, near his home town, and he honors the invitation—bringing along his new extended “family,” his disciples (from now on Jesus will travel with an entourage). This is not the point at which he had been planning to profoundly reveal the core of his mission, but when the wine runs out he won't let the family who's throwing the wedding banquet be embarrassed. And so he transforms a large volume of water into wine—better wine than the family had originally provided.

Thus Jesus reveals that he is the life of the world, a divine intervention in the same-old, same-old that will enhance and renew the existence of all creation. The Gospel of John says that the Word—the creative, saving power of God—became flesh and dwelt among us. The Word will go on

dwelling among us, a fact that is made concrete for Christian believers especially in the sacrament of Holy Communion, the Eucharist. Jesus is bread and wine for the life of the world. Jewish wedding ritual has used bread and wine for millennia as symbols of the holiness of the bond of matrimony. We inherit from our Jewish roots this sacramental sense of enacting God's real presence through ritual, now enhanced by Jesus' proclamation that he is the true vine and the bread that has come down from heaven.

This is the Second Sunday in the season after Epiphany, and the theme of the season is the revelation of Jesus Christ to the world. The way Jesus is revealed in the wedding feast at Cana reminds us that his favorite image of the kingdom of heaven is a dinner party—not a stodgy, straight-laced affair but something more like a wedding banquet after the wine has gone around a few times. Jesus is good news, and the news is enjoyable. It's *fun*. The best thing about the Pentecostal renewal movement in the Church over the last century or so is that it has given Christians across denominational lines official permission to whoop and holler some when it comes to celebrating Jesus.

Jesus was first revealed sacramentally at his baptism; he was first revealed Eucharistically at a village wedding party. Sacraments emphasize that God is with us in Jesus with the same closeness and reality as water that is being poured over us, the same closeness and reality as bread and wine in our hands and in our mouths. In what way is Jesus' real presence in our lives revealed around our tables, in our

gatherings, as we walk or drive along the streets we know so well? He's always around, closer than the breeze that swirls a leaf along the sidewalk or makes a candle flame tremble. The new life in Christ is splashing around our feet as we walk through rain or slush; it is gurgling in the glass we fill in the kitchen—not just in the fancy cup we share at the altar here on Sunday morning. *All* the time. What are we to *do* with this revelation, so mighty and so humble? We might start by giving thanks. Then open our hearts to his presence, and see what happens.