

# A banquet awaits the faithful

## THE GOOD NEWS

GOD'S WORD IN  
EVERDAY LIVING



By Father Paul Turner

**WEDDINGS** make some of the best stories, and the one at Cana was no exception (John 2:1-11). Most everyone knows the story: The wine runs out and Jesus' mother asks him to do something about it. He prefers not to meddle, but acquiesces with a whale of a miracle. Jesus turns water into wine -- vats of it. Not that cheap stuff you buy by the gallon. Good wine. Jesus tosses off his first miracle like a rookie who unassumingly pitches a no-hitter while people talk about the weather. Connoisseurs notice the wine. Nobody notices Jesus. Happy ending.

What makes this miracle stand out? Why do people remember it more than, say, the healing of the Geranese demoniac or the curing of the two blind beggars? Perhaps it's the wedding. Perhaps it's the mother of Jesus. (She disappears until the crucifixion, and John never tells us her name.)

Perhaps it's just being first. According to John, this is the first miracle Jesus works. Lucky for us, John gives this detail. None of the other Gospels include this story, and although every Gospel begins the miracles somewhere, none of them accentuates the first miracle except John.

Hold your horses, you may be saying. What's John doing here anyway? You may be aware that we are in Cycle C of the lectionary, which means most of the Gospels this year come from Luke. Since we've just entered ordinary time, what's John doing here? And why is it the second Sunday in ordinary time when we never had a first?

**LAST THINGS FIRST.** Believe it or not, there is no first Sunday in ordinary time this year. It's just a quirk of the calendar. Ordinarily, the first Sunday of ordinary time is the Baptism of the Lord, which is also the last day of the Christmas season. How can one day be both Christmas and ordinary time? I've never figured that one out either, and can only guess that the lectionary hopes we don't notice.

This year, however, Christmas and New Year's

fall on Sundays. That wreaks havoc with the Christmas cycle, which, six years out of seven, puts the Feast of the Holy Family on the Sunday after Christmas, and the Baptism of the Lord on the Sunday after Epiphany. This year, no dice. The Christmas season is already too long. So the Holy Family made their appearance on a Friday (Dec. 30) and we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord on Monday (tomorrow), as Christmas quietly slips away. So this year, the second Sunday of ordinary time is a real misnomer, but what can you do?

You can wonder what John is doing here. John is here for good reason. First, John shows up every year on the second Sunday of ordinary time. The lectionary doesn't give us a complete year devoted to John, so he makes his appearances during Lent and Easter, and wherever else he gets a foot in the door. He's successfully found a niche on the Sunday that first shakes loose the Christmas season.

**THERE'S ANOTHER** more profound reason why John appears as next Sunday's Gospel. On the old calendar, before the reforms of Vatican II, when we had a one-year cycle of readings, we always heard the wedding at Cana on this Sunday. Why? Because it's part of the Christmas story! Yes, the Christmas story!

How? We have an old tradition that links three stories: the Epiphany, the Baptism of the Lord, and the wedding at Cana. Together they form the manifestations of Christ to the world. The Epiphany revealed Christ to the nations by the light of the star, the baptism revealed Christ by the voice of the Father and the descent of the Spirit, and the wedding at Cana revealed Christ's power to work miracles for the first time.

Don't believe me? Check out this hymn in your parish hymnal: "Songs of Thankfulness and Praise." You'll find these three stories in lines like, "manifested by the star to the wise men from afar," "manifest at Jordan's stream, prophet, priest and king supreme," "and at Cana, wedding guest, God and man made manifest."

**THIS TRADITION** surfaces only in Cycle C. This year, since the Baptism of the Lord moves to a Monday, we miss the connection.

However, let's not miss the significance of this miracle. Jesus has come to replace what was old with something new, and to fill what was empty. He does it all with wine, a symbol of the banquet which lies ahead for those with faith in the power of God.

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## Daily Scripture Readings

### Epiphany

Sunday, January 8, 1995

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13

Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12

### Baptism of the Lord

Monday, January 9

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

Psalms 104:1-4, 24-25,

27-30

Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7

Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

### Tuesday, January 10

Hebrews 2:5-12

Psalms 8:2, 5-9

Mark 1:21-28

### Wednesday, January 11

Hebrews 2:14-18

Psalms 105:1-4, 6-9

Mark 1:29-39

### Thursday, January 12

Hebrews 3:7-14

Psalms 95:6-11

Mark 1:40-45

### Friday, January 13

Hebrews 4:1-5, 11

Psalms 78:34, 36-8

Mark 2:1-12

### Saturday, January 14

Hebrews 4:12-16

Psalms 19:8-10, 15

Mark 2:13-17

### Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sunday, January 15

Isaiah 62:1-5

Psalms 96:1-3, 7-10

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

John 2:1-11

