

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Second Sunday after The Epiphany
January 17, 2016

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We only hear the Cana wedding feast gospel once every three years at Sunday Mass. That is regrettable. From ancient times it was considered one of the *three principal manifestations* of Christ which give Epiphany its name. And without this incident at Cana the presentation of God Incarnate to the world is incomplete in a very important way.

The Cana wedding feast reminds us of an aspect of God Incarnate we tend *not* to emphasize. The modern world view accepts readily the *humanity* of Jesus but dismisses His *divinity* as an old wives' tale. To combat that tendency Holy Church insists on the Deity of Christ. We find in the other two Epiphany showings plenty of opportunity to stress that divinity. But by affirming rightly our Lord's divine nature, we may forget that the gospel also asserts His *humanity*. The Holy Ghost was talking about God Incarnate when He declared, "He rejoiced in the habitable parts of his earth" and, His "delights were with the sons of men." (*Proverbs* 8:31)

In the gospels we have descriptions of long nights of prayer, with our Lord rising early before dawn to pray before rejoining His disciples by walking across the water. These are among the many indications of our Lord's divine nature. But we have other examples showing the humanity of Jesus, warm and loving, and revealing an irresistibly attractive personality. There are equally many accounts of the Blessed Lord with those who suffer, His healing of the leper, and His entering the death chamber of the little girl at Capernaum. We must not forget His delight in the joys of the house at Bethany, in the homes of the Galilean fishermen, and above all, His presence at a marriage feast in Cana. That wedding might not have been remembered at all except for what happened there.

A secret of the comfort Our Lord gave (and received) both on occasions of sorrow and happiness, lay in the *genuine-ness of His sympathy*. What joy must have been kindled in the hearts of the bride and groom, their families, and the whole village, to read the happy, responsive, approving, and encouraging face of Jesus Christ! The highest of created beings is seen basking in the love of its Creator, and without the slightest theological notion occurring to any of them. At that wedding these men and women felt intensely that it was good to have Jesus there.

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Here is a sign to us that Our Blessed Saviour, God that He is, is a lover of His fellow man and is never bored by His association with us. In every encounter, Jesus finds a perfect opportunity for the expression of His kindly and loving nature. We can shut Him out. He does not shut us out.

I remember from college days the father of a fraternity brother. This man was a renowned corporation attorney and chief legal counsel of a *Fortune 500* company. He was very secure in his job. He hadn't the slightest need to impress anybody. He was also a homebody, and on more than one occasion a gracious host to me. But with his corporate position went a certain amount of socializing. How he hated cocktail parties and all the loud small talk. Fortunately, this man was becoming deaf, and he turned it to good use. He'd arrive at a party, order a scotch and soda, turn off his hearing aid, and just smile when anyone tried to talk to him! That was one man's defense against social obligations where most people were on the climb.

How different that is from the image we have of Our Blessed Lord. He comes to us with a keen living interest in all that pertains to the happiness or sorrows of His people. It is an interest born of the fact God is love. So the miracle at Cana came naturally out of Our Lord's interest in the little things of life. Turning water into wine was not a great act of mercy. It was the simple kindness of a loving heart to save a friend and host from an embarrassing situation. We remember Cana not so much because of the miracle, but because the Heart it came from was the loving Sacred Heart of the One Who is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.