

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The 2nd Sunday after The Epiphany  
January 20, 2019

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The first miracle of Our Lord Jesus was at a Cana wedding feast. From ancient times it has been considered one of the *three principal showings* or **manifestations** of Christ which give the Epiphany season its very name. Without what happened at Cana the full presentation of God Incarnate to the world is missing an essential ingredient.

The modern view of Christian belief is to accept readily the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth but dismiss His divinity as an old wives' tale. This happens to be the very opposite of the ancient view. Those people believed Jesus is God and then asked how could He also be man. Of course the Gospel insists upon the Deity of Christ, and in the other two Epiphany events (the Wise Men and the Baptism by John in the Jordan) there is plenty of opportunity to stress that divinity. But God Incarnate came to us fully God and fully man, and we must never forget the Scriptures also assert His *humanity*. *Proverbs 8:31* is describing God when it declares: "He rejoiced in the habitable parts of his earth" and His "delights were with the sons of men."

In the New Testament the descriptions of long nights of prayer, walking across the water, the healings, and, above all, His Resurrection, are indications of Our Lord's divine nature. But in the Gospels are other accounts showing Our Lord's humanity as warm and loving and revealing an irresistibly attractive personality. We have hints of the Lord's enjoyment of the family life at Bethany and in the homes of the Galilean fishermen, and above all, His presence at a marriage feast in Cana. The Lord's presence there might not have been remembered at all except for what happened there. And this is a reminder the Gospels are not a biography. St John memorably told us if the Gospel were biography the world could not contain the books that would be written about all Jesus said and did.

At the heart of the comfort our Lord gave and received on occasions of sorrow and happiness lay in the *genuineness of His sympathy*. We can only speculate at what joy must have been kindled in the hearts of the bride and groom, their families and the whole village, to see the happy and responsive, approving and encouraging, face of Jesus Christ! Here were the highest of created beings basking in the love of their Creator. But there were no theological notions spoiling the moment! They all

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knew intensely it was good to have Jesus there. All this is a sign to us 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 the perfect opportunity for the expression of His kindly and loving nature.

The father of a college fraternity brother was chief legal counsel for a *Fortune 500* corporation, and secure in his job. He did not have the slightest need to impress anybody. He was also a homebody, and on more than one occasion he and his wife were gracious hosts to me. But a certain amount of socializing went with his position. How he hated the cocktail party circuit with small talk fueled by alcohol! In his later years before retirement he was growing deaf. But he turned the problem into an asset. When he arrived at a party he'd accept 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 when most people were there not because they wanted to be but because they *had* to be.

It's a funny story. But how different that is from the image of Our Blessed Lord, Who comes to us with a keen living interest in all that pertains to the happiness and sorrows of His people? It is a sturdy Gospel principle Christ's care for all in no way diminishes His care for each. It is an interest born from the fact *God is love*. 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. No one was restored to life or healed. It was the simple kindness of a loving heart to save a friend and host from an embarrassing situation. Why do we remember Cana wedding feast? Not so much because of the miracle, but because *the heart it came from* is the Sacred Heart of the One Who is Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Along with the Wise Men and the Baptism by John, Cana is an essential revelation of the Son of God, and a *very* good part of the Gospel Good News!