WATER INTO WINE

As we return to the Ordinary Sundays we continue to reflect on the Mission of Jesus. The four Gospels introduce Jesus and his Mission in different ways. On the feast of the Epiphany we heard Matthew's story of the Magi that shows us that Jesus is the Light to the nations.

Last Sunday, The Baptism of the Lord, we read Luke's account of the Baptism of Jesus where Jesus is revealed as the Son of God by a voice from heaven and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Now this Sunday, before continuing to follow Luke's Gospel, we turn to John's Gospel.

Each year we read from John's Gospel in Lent and in the Easter Season. Unfortunately, we do not follow John in the same semi-continuous reading that we use for the other Gospels. Therefore, it is more difficult to see the particular focus of John's Gospel.

John's gospel is sometimes called the "Book of Signs" because of the various signs that reveal who Jesus is and how people come to believe in him. The first of the signs is found in chapter 2, the changing of water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana. This event is sometimes called the first miracle of Jesus but we fail to understand the meaning of these "signs" if we only see them as miracle stories.

The wedding feast is an image used by the prophets to describe the relationship between God and the People of Israel. That relationship is summed up by the covenant. Jesus comes as the one who will transform that covenant-relationship.

John's Gospel also often uses symbolism. The water jars used for the Jewish purification rituals are the symbol of the Jewish Law of Moses that Jesus comes to transform. The wine that Jesus provides in abundance (the best wine) is the symbol of God's grace and truth that have come into the world through Jesus.

The sign revealed Jesus' "glory" and his disciples came to believe in him. The various signs in John's Gospel lead to the final glorification of Jesus when his hour comes - his death and resurrection.

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Published in St Mary's Parish Concord Bulletin