

**THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**

Text: St. John 2:1-11

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Our Gospel text presents a very pertinent question: Why does our LORD JESUS give wine to drunks? At the wedding feast in Cana, our LORD did just that: He gave wine, as our text declares, to those who *“have well drunk.”* The Greek word used here does not mean sated. The word used here is better translated, as *“intoxicated.”* We might say soused or knee-walking drunk. The guests at the wedding feast were so completely drunk that they would not have been able to tell the difference between good and bad wine.

So, why? Why does our LORD give good wine to drunks? As an aside, the fact that JESUS did this, completely overcomes any and all arguments that claim that drinking alcoholic beverages is somehow sinful in and of itself. JESUS, who knew no sin, does not lead men into nor tempt men to sin, but guards and preserves us that we may finally prevail and gain victory over sin. Besides, alcoholic beverages such as beer and wine were far safer to drink in those days than was the water drawn from fetid pools and contaminated rivers which, even today, is the world’s leading killer with diseases such as cholera, typhoid fever, and hepatitis A.

So, again I ask, why does our LORD give good wine to drunks? Additionally, why would He choose this miracle as the beginning of His signs?

This *“sign”* was performed by CHRIST *“on the third day.”* The HOLY SPIRIT does not waste ink. The use of numbers, in Holy Scripture, merits our attention, for numbers often reveal something quite important. Therefore, such an introduction to this *“first of signs”* of our LORD links it to other *“on the third day”* events in the Old Testament such as Abraham arriving on Mount Moriah to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, *“on the third day,”* and the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai *“on the third day.”* A seminary professor, under whom I studied, writes that in Jewish tradition, the third day on which the Torah was given is also counted as the sixth day, tying *“the third day”* to the creation account in Genesis. Still, the most obvious *“on the third day”* connection is in the New Testament in the account of our LORD’s resurrection.

Thus, the *“third day”* connects the Cana account with the Creation account, the substitutionary atonement account of the blood of the ram for Isaac, and the Law of the old covenant given to the people of God in the Torah. The new covenant is tied to this *“on the third day”* event through the death of CHRIST and His resurrection *“on the third day.”*

Our God, the one true God, is not a god of chaos, reacting to events as they occur. He is not a victim of circumstance. Nor did He just roll the dice and then sit back to see how things would turn out. He is a God of order who orders all things, planning all things as they relate to

mankind's salvation, and this He has done since before the foundation of the world, and we often see His plan in numbers.

Therefore, the purpose of the signs and numbers, indeed, the entirety of Holy Scripture, are not a simple telling of a story in one long sequence of miracles and salvation accounts, as though the authors are simply relating a musty old history or a sequence of events in an adventure or romance novel. No, their purpose is the revelation and manifestation of God and His glory.

All of Holy Scripture is *“written that you may believe that JESUS is the CHRIST, the SON of God, and that believing you may have life in His Name.”* God has preserved and passed down through His prophets, through Jesus, His only begotten SON, through JESUS' apostles, and the One Holy catholic and Apostolic Church, His Word of life, the Word that holds God before our eyes, making Him visible to all men as He confronts all men with His presence and His glory, all that you may believe and have life in His Name. He ties His Word together with numbers, and no number could be more important, no event more important than what occurs *“on the third day,”* the day of our LORD's resurrection, the day to which all other third days point; the day to which all other third days must bow down and pay homage.

So why? Why would JESUS give good wine to drunks? Why would He choose this miracle as the beginning of His signs? The answer is simple really; to manifest His glory as of the only begotten of the Father, to be *“epiphanied”* if you will, and create faith where there was none before.

Our text tells us that with this *“sign,”* JESUS manifested His glory and His disciples believed in Him. In the account of our SAVIOR's life, nothing is done that has not been done except for the express purpose of revealing His glory so that we may believe in Him. Believing in JESUS is to be found in JESUS. Believing in JESUS is to be His disciple and receive His life. Believing in JESUS is our salvation.

Therefore, the account of the wedding at Cana and JESUS' *“beginning of signs”* is a living portrait of living truth, for we are all drunks, inebriated, literally knee-walking drunk, on sin. Our lust is for our own selfish desires. We are intoxicated with the pleasures of the flesh and our focus is on pleasing ourselves to death. But JESUS died on Good Friday, the sixth day, that we may be saved, and *“on the third day,”* the new covenant began with a new creation—the covenant of grace and mercy through the forgiveness of sin.

Our LORD's *“beginning of signs”* took place at a wedding to demonstrate that this JESUS is truly the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, who calls His Bride to Himself, not because she is beautiful but precisely because she is not. Into His wedding chamber comes this deformed, ugly, prostitute, who wallows in her sin, and He removes her filthy rags, washes her in water and blood, and robes her in finery. The never-ending marriage of God and Church is begun. It is for this purpose that JESUS has come. A new Israel will now arise, bathed in the Blood of the Lamb and washed clean by water and the SPIRIT.

Now, let us do as our LORD's virgin Mother declares, *"Whatever He says to you, do it."* This is not an order, rather it is an invitation. For you have been cleansed, that is, made holy by water made efficacious by JESUS' Blood. You are the Bride, God's Church, and what God has joined together, let no man separate. Therefore, come to the Feast, receive the Body your Husband gave into death for you; receive the Blood your Husband poured out for you and for many.

Do this and receive our LORD's glory, for JESUS' glory is that He gives the finest of wine to drunks who do not deserve it, who, on their own could never desire it, and yet, He pours out His glory upon us until our cups overflow.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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