

We have in today's feast another venue of revelation – the incarnation was revealed through angels and the epiphany of a star. Last weekend we had God the Father declare Jesus is His Son and today it is Jesus himself who reveals it through his very first miracle or as St. John would call it, the first *sign* manifesting his glory.

The very purpose of Jesus coming into the world was to change and transform the world – changing death into life - symbolically foretold in his changing water to wine.

You might recall the first covenant that God made with humanity was that of that of the marriage covenant between Adam and Eve. And here it is in our gospel a sign of the new covenant to come begins, once again, from within a marriage.

The water he used for this first sign was that which was used for the endless ritual cleansings one would need to keep from becoming impure. Obviously one would not drink it, but pour it over one's body – it was a religion of only externals, nothing to change the person from within.

The message is clear: the time for ritual cleansing had passed as Jesus transformed the purified water of the Pharisees into a new choice wine, an era far superior to the first. And then from this wine, he would change it into his blood and we would then take God within us.

The revelation of this sign is that Jesus can take what is tasteless and empty and change it into something rich and beautiful.

*Whenever Jesus comes into a person's life, there comes a new quality of life, rich in meaning and taste.

*Invite Jesus and what appears to be running out, he will change and renew with something far better.

+I think of the sorrow of Haiti – Port-au-Prince was a pretty bad place before any earthquake took place and now it appears to be completely empty. But you know, Christ incarnate can change things and perhaps from the devastation, through the help of the world, a new Haiti will rise from the rubble and be better than it ever was before. Jesus turned water into wine as a sign that he will and can change the emptiness of death into life...hopelessness into joy.

+The Scripture scholar William Barclay wrote about an alcoholic who had found Christ and no longer drank because Christ changed and transformed his life. The man was with a group of co-workers who were giving him a hard time about his conversion and the irony is that they were speaking about this particular gospel.

One commented, *"So you really believe he changed water into wine?"* And he replied, *"I don't know about the change of water into wine, but what I do know is Jesus changed beer into furniture."* (Meaning: A change in priorities, as he will no longer spend money on beer and thus will be able to buy furniture for his house.)

That is the revelation of this 1st sign, it is in the nature of Jesus to *change* and *renew*.

+ I experienced this in another wedding that Jesus was surely present. This one particular lady was known to be a bit caustic – a person with an edge, an edge toward even anger. Then she met the most gentle a man and ended up marrying him.

The transformation over the months following the wedding was so very obvious as it was evident that the edge was gone completely. She became one of the most pleasant of people to be around. Yes, Jesus changed water into wine at that wedding, as well.

Of course for Jesus to do so, he has to be invited. I have presided over some weddings in which I questioned: Was Jesus invited here?

Mary shows us that in her dialogue with Jesus how that change can be there for all of us when we invite him into our lives.

Mary appears to act as an ancient wedding coordinator and some have suggested that the wedding may have been for her nephew and so we find Mary stepping in to manage a crises situation.

+I once had a wedding (not here) in which everyone had lined up toward the entrance of the church, but the bride had not yet arrived. I went outside to look for her, but she was nowhere in sight. I returned into the church, and to my horror, the wedding coordinator had sent everyone forward in procession. The groomsmen were in place, but I was able to stop the bridesmaids. The organist was banging away at the keys, but the bride did not show up until almost ten minutes later. It was not a good omen.

Well, Mary was an excellent wedding coordinator for she understood that running out of wine would have meant a very bad omen, as if to symbolize that this marriage would also run dry. Here we find the strong Jewish mother exerting her influence, as the first miracle performed by Jesus came through Mary's insistence.

Okay, I know some of you may have been taken back in Jesus addressing his mother as "woman". I can't imagine would happen if my mother asked me to help with something, and I reply, "*Woman, how does your concern affect me?*"

+Have you ever read an email from someone, sent in loving jest, but the person takes it in the wrong way, totally misunderstanding something sent to them with *true love mixed with humor*?

The reason for such a response is that emails do not always reflect the tone of the one sending it to us. *Lighten up the tone* of Jesus (make it gentle or even with a bit of humor), and we would easily understand that he was conveying something entirely different.

Think of my response to my mother in *a humorous tone* and she would have certainly smiled...maybe.

Secondly, how Jesus addresses Mary is lost on our modern ears. In Jesus' day, using the title of "*woman*" would mean the highest degree of respect – somewhat like *Madam or Ma'am*, but to us it comes out sounding rather condescending.

You see, when Jesus said to her, "*Woman, how does your concern affect me?*" He is in reality saying, "*Don't you worry mother... don't make it your concern, leave it to me take care of and make it my concern.*"

She does exactly that and gives to him her worries and makes it his, saying "*Do whatever he tells you.*"

*Even when Mary did not understand what Jesus was going to do – even when it looked as if he had refused her request – Mary believed in him. Yes, give it to him and then "*do whatever he tells you*" and he will change and transform, no matter how hopeless it might appear.

In everyday life comes periods of darkness, when we do not see the way and it is then we *must* trust him and make it his concern. It is hard for me to grasp what has taken place in Haiti, but what I do know is that he turned the cries of those dying, the cries of those who were always suffering into the peace of heaven this world could never offer. He embraces each one of them and they now know they were never forsaken. He embraces all that we cast off, all the lives that we do not value as sacred, Jesus always values and loves. He will and does turn cries of pain into the joy of being loved.

And for those still living, he will and can transform when the world is willing "*to do whatever he tells you.*"