

Sunday 19th January 2025; Epiphany 3. Week for Christian Unity. Benefice Holy communion, Ampleforth.

Today we continue the primary theme of the Season of Epiphany, of God's glory being revealed and made manifest to us through Jesus Christ. That was the glory that was revealed to the shepherds at the first Christmas, when they found a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger. That was the glory that was revealed to the Magi when they followed the star to Bethlehem; the glory that was revealed at the river Jordan, when Jesus was baptized by John, and a voice from heaven declaring him God's beloved son and today, the glory that is revealed through the miracle in Cana of Galilee where at a wedding, Jesus turned water into wine.

Weddings were big events then and would typically last seven days with lots of food and wine for the guests who travelled, usually on foot, to attend, this event where family and community bonds were celebrated with good food and abundant quantities of wine. Often, not all the guests would stay the entire time so it would be difficult to predict how much food and drink to have available and to run out of wine at a wedding like this would be deeply embarrassing to the host. So, when the wine gave out at this wedding, Mary wanted Jesus to do something about it and Jesus turned those six stone jars of water not just into ordinary wine, but the best.

This miracle might seem rather unimportant in the grand scheme of things. Jesus isn't saving a life, giving sight to the blind, or helping the deaf to hear. He isn't feeding five thousand or casting out demons. So why is it so significant as John proclaims?

Jesus' presence at this wedding reflects His commitment to engaging with ordinary everyday life, reinforcing His

mission to connect with people embodying divine grace amidst human experiences. Transforming water into wine was not just a display of power; it illustrated His ability to bring joy and abundance. It is significant because this miracle teaches us so much about the life of faith, because it provides us with this powerful image for what a life in relationship with Jesus looks like. Jesus turns ordinary water into extraordinary wine, the best. It shows us that in relationship with Jesus there is more than what we can see, more than what we can find on our own. Life with Jesus turns our plain old water life into a rich, wonderful, bountiful life. Transforming water into wine was not just a display of power; it illustrated His ability to bring joy and abundance. This timeless account reminds us about love, community, and divine grace woven throughout life's journey.

This may not be the most needed of Jesus' miracles, or the most practical, but it is essential; and it is the first of his signs, revealing his glory. That is the purpose of all these signs - to reveal Jesus' glory, and to help people come to believe. Each sign or miracle recorded in the gospels reveals another aspect of Jesus' glory. His compassion for the sick, and for the hungry crowds; his power over nature; and even his power over death. The story of the wedding at Cana then serves as a powerful reminder of Jesus' presence in our everyday lives. It shows that joy and celebration are integral to the human experience, and that Christ desires to be part of those moments. The miracle of turning water into wine illustrates not only His divine power but also His willingness to meet our needs, even in seemingly trivial matters.

At Cana, Jesus turned water into wine, a great sign, symbol, and metaphor for His blood. We remember it each time we partake of the blessed new wine at every Eucharist, when we give thanks, and remember the cup

that is the new covenant in Jesus' blood, shed for us and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. As at the wedding at Cana, in the wine we are given something ordinary, but made extraordinary because of Jesus, the blood of the Lamb, shed for you and me, and for us all, for the forgiveness of sin, for life, and for salvation. Our song during Communion will remind us of this.

As we commence the Week for Christian Unity, we are reminded today that as it is blood that runs through our veins to keep us alive, so it is the blood of Jesus, the new wine, that runs through the Universal Church that makes it alive, that should make it extraordinary, that should also make its people extraordinary too.

Thanks be to God. Amen.