

# Epiphany 2 Yc 25 Homily

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.

I've called the theme of this sermon, Water into Wine, a Miracle or Something Deeper Going On.

Have you ever been preparing a dinner for family or for guests and at the last minute, when you are in the midst of cooking, you realise that you have run out of an important and necessary ingredient and perhaps you forgot to get the wine? You hope that the supermarket or bottle shop is open and has what you need and that you have a partner or a friend who can do the mercy dash for you to get the food item or the wine.

Who has found themselves in that position? It would be great if your friend or partner could just immediately sort of do a trick and turn tap water into perfect wine or suddenly produce the basil or the cream or whatever else you need to make a success of your planned meal. I wonder if that is how you may have listened to this famous gospel reading today from John. If turning water into wine is how you sometimes expect Jesus to act in your life.

In the gospel story, Jesus and his mother Mary and some of his disciples are at a wedding feast in Cana, which is not too far from Nazareth, where Jesus and his family lived. Mary, being a mother and very observant, quietly notices that the wine has run out. What to do to avoid acute embarrassment to the wedding couple and the hosts? Mary decides the best thing to do is to tell Jesus.

He will know what to do. Mary must have had supreme confidence in the wisdom of her son or in his, what I'll call, entrepreneurial skills. I suggest that we all at times in our lives would like Jesus to take over and to resolve a particular problem.

We want Jesus to be there to say the magic words and all will suddenly be fine and hopefully even better than before. However, this gospel story, I don't believe, is not about magic. It's not even meant to be a miracle story.

And you may be a little shocked to hear me say this. But it is surely significant that none of the other three gospels tell this wonderful story. We all know it, we all love it, but it's not in the other three gospels.

It is such a powerful story. It is often called the miracle of the wedding feast at Cana in some commentaries on John, and is a scene often depicted in some famous paintings. But John, the gospel writer, doesn't call this a miracle.

Why? What does he call it? A sign. Now, a sign as we know it is normally meant to either point out a direction to go. The sign's on the street corner, the sign's on the highway to Newborough or wherever you're going.

Or it's a sign that points us to something important. So what does this sign point us to? What possibilities in this story are meant to raise, are we meant to think about in our faith and our lives? Let's forget about the miracle part. What's the sign that Jesus, that John, is

talking about? I don't know if Jesus historically and literally turned water into wine at a wedding feast in Cana in Galilee.

I'm sure that as the Son of God, Jesus could easily have done such a miracle. However, something odd must have happened at this particular wedding feast. In reality, in today's world, have any of you, this is not in the sermon but I just thought of it, have any of you been watching on ABC TV, what's his name, Professor Krzyzewski or whatever his name is, talking about how things are made? Chocolate and other things, I don't know what he's been on about but wine's the same really.

The turning of water and grapes into wine is still a miracle in today's world. I think the turning of water and grapes into wine is such a miracle of God's wonderful provision. I don't drink wine, except at communion, but I think it's a wonderful miracle.

It happens in wineries all over the world, though not without a great deal of time and effort and skill. But I do not think John tells this story of his gospel as an example of a wonderful miracle story. As I said, John calls it a sign.

It is therefore not really just a story about turning water into wine, but it is ultimately about calling forth faith, hope and life, where there is none left but wine left. So what's wine a symbol of, a sign of? Not getting drunk, but of life. It's about calling forth transformation.

It's about new life. There are at least two strong hints, I don't know whether you noticed them, but there are two strong hints in this story, at least, to indicate this. The first, I think, very clear hint, but you might have missed it, is that John tells us that this story occurs when? On the third day.

That's quite significant, isn't it? On the third day. Why is this seemingly unusual reference made? And so why is it therefore important to us? And John is writing this gospel at least 60 years later than this event. He is writing this gospel to the people of the resurrection faith in Jesus the Christ.

What they do believe happens on the third day? Jesus rose from the dead. We all know the Easter story and the resurrection. And as St Paul says in several of his letters to the early Christians, if Jesus had not been raised to new and risen life on the third day, then our faith ultimately has been in vain.

This mention of the third day by John the gospel writer is a clear code. That something, a clear sign if you like, that something about the resurrection is taking place in this wedding feast. The turning of water into wine is a sign pointing to the resurrection.

The second hint, perhaps a less obvious hint, is that the sign takes place at a wedding. It's not a normal dinner. It is a celebration of the joining of two lives into one.

It's about new life. At a wedding I'm sure we all hope that the two people being married will begin and become new life together. They hopefully will be changed and empowered by each other to become something better and to be open to as yet unknowable opportunities.

But in this story for John the gospel writer and for Jesus, the running out of wine is not a problem to be fixed at the beginning of something new. Marriage is for the reader to be

seen both as a physical life-bonding reality of two people, but it is also to be seen as a spiritual marriage of the person of faith with God which allows the abundance of new and marvellous wine of life to flow. This story and sign is about calling us all into new and more abundant life.

We note that the choosers of the readings in this lectionary have put that wonderful reading from Isaiah at the start which is all about God's marriage to us. There the connection is made very clear. Now nobody likes running out of milk or eggs or even more importantly for life, running out of water.

But maybe how we creatively respond to this crisis is necessary for our growth and maturity. I'm not talking about a glass is half full or glass is half empty attitude to life, though a glass is half full attitude is a very important one. We hate people, don't hate them, we feel sorry for people whose glasses are always half empty.

How many people do you know who always just have half empty glasses rather than half full? That's a great symbol that. I am talking about when our glass is completely dry. When we are deeply thirsty and parched.

I'm sure that most of us have been there. We figuratively run out of water or the wine of our life. Our life is empty and colourless and tasteless.

There seems to be no life and no vibrancy left in us. When has the water of life run out for you? If it hasn't, you're very lucky. But at some stage or other we all have that happen, most of us anyway.

What parts of your life are even now perhaps dry and empty? Importantly, we must also remember that it's not only about us. We can probably easily name other people we know who seem to have no tasty wine left in their lives. When the wine of meaning or love or hope or compassion or justice have completely run out.

And to be honest, it's happening all around us. It happens with many people as they face the death of a loved one. Or as they face dealing with cancer or other major illness or disability.

Or as they face the enforced isolation from loved ones. And we all experience that during COVID of course. Or we may face the fear of loved ones travelling anywhere overseas during this most uncertain time of war and violence and sudden storms and cyclones.

We hear it happen in so many tragic news reports of natural disasters. And madman terrorism and violence. It also happens as we cope with the sad failings of many once revered institutions.

And as we listen to the mistruths and hypocrisy of some of our high profile personalities and leaders. It happens when we see and hear of the open abandonment of considered norms of justice and truth telling. And of democracy by so many political leaders worldwide.

I'm not talking about the supply of a good Shiraz. Or a good Chardonnay. To fill the void.

Too many people have tried that and it doesn't really work. I'm talking about the wonderful spirit filled wine of compassion. Of inclusion, of caring compromise, of understanding.

And of Jesus' style of justice to enable ourselves and others to live meaningful lives again. When the wine gives out and life is dying on the vine. And when we are no longer intoxicated by the power of the Holy Spirit in us.

Then we are invited by this gospel story to say we with Mary to Jesus. We've run out of wine. We've all probably said that in our prayers to God, not in those words.

But I've run out of the spirit. I've run out of your power. And we know others that are needful and empty.

Then we probably tell God what is required. No, Mary doesn't do that. Mary doesn't say to the servants, you've run out of wine, go and find some.

What does she say? Listen to Him. Another sign. It's a huge, huge gospel story this way.

There's lots of signs. Some of them I'm not going to touch on. Most of us, I guess, probably try to do that as faithfully as we can. To trust in God's Holy Spirit. To be open to Jesus. But we are not really as trusting and as open as Mary is.

This gospel story calls us to a radical openness to the workings of God in our lives. Sometimes we are called to be the ones who see there is no wine like Mary does. And then to do what we can to bring about positive change in a situation for others under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

And sometimes we actually need to be the ones who carry and pour such wine. Into the empty glasses of the lives of others. When the wine of life runs out, Jesus needs us to respond as much as we need Him to respond.

It's a two-way street. Opening the door to Jesus is always a risk. We are hoping that in God, the future wine of life to come is better and more abundant than the old exhausted wine.

I don't want to focus on this too much, but are you shocked by the story in the sense that Jesus created a huge number of gallons of wine? Was Jesus a drunkard? No. That's another one of the signs, but I won't go into that, that's making lots of wine. You'll never run out, is what that's about.

There's lots of signs in here. And also the sign that it was water for purification. Suddenly it becomes wine for life.

When the wine of life runs out, Jesus needs us to respond as much as we need Him to respond. Opening the door to Jesus is always a risk. We are hoping that in God, the future wine of life to come is better and more abundant than the old exhausted wine.

There are empty bottles and empty glasses of life and hope that litter our lives and the lives of those we know. And of those millions of people we don't know around us. May we be open to help fill them again with new minds and new life that Jesus is abundantly offering.

In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen.

**Transcribed by [TurboScribe.ai](https://www.turboscribe.ai).**