

Saint_Thomas_explains_the_Gospel_for_the_2nd_Sunday_after_Epiphany

And the third day, there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee: and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and his disciples, to the marriage. And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to him: They have no wine. And Jesus saith to her: Woman, what is that to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come. His mother saith to the waiters: Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye. Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three measures apiece. Jesus saith to them: Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And Jesus saith to them: Draw out now, and carry to the chief steward of the feast. And they carried it. And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew who had drawn the water; the chief steward calleth the bridegroom, and saith to him: Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse. But thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee; and manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him. (St. John 2: 1-11)

CHRY. Our Lord being known in Galilee, they invite Him to a marriage: And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee.

ALCUIN. Galilee is a province; Cana a village in it.

CHRY. They invite our Lord to the marriage, not as a great person, but merely as one they knew, one of the many; for which reason the Evangelist says, And the mother of Jesus was there. As they invited the mother, so they invited the Son: and therefore, Jesus was called, and His disciples to the marriage: and He came, as caring more for our good, shall His own dignity. He who disdained not to take upon Him the form of a servant, disdained not to come to the marriage of servants.

AUG. Let the proud man blush to see the humility of God. Lo, among other things, the Son of the Virgin comes to a marriage; He who, when He was with the Father, instituted marriage.

BEDE. His condescension in coming to the marriage, and the miracle He wrought there, are, even considering them in the letter only, a strong confirmation of the a faith. Therein too are condemned the errors of Tatian, Marcion, and others who detract from the honor of marriage. For if the undefiled bed, and the marriage celebrated with due chastity, partook at all of sin, our Lord would never have come to one. Whereas now, conjugal chastity being good, the continence of widows better, the perfection of the virgin state best, to sanction all these degrees, but distinguish the merit of each, He deigned to be born of the pure womb of the Virgin; was blessed after birth by the prophetic voice of the widow Anna; and now invited in manhood to attend the celebration of a marriage, honors that also by the presence of His goodness.

AUG. What marvel, if He went to that house to a marriage, Who came into this world to a marriage. For here He has His spouse whom He redeemed with His own blood, to whom He gave the pledge of the Spirit, and whom He united to Himself in the womb of the

Virgin. For the Word is the Bridegroom, and human flesh the bride, and both together are one Son of God and Son of man. That womb of the Virgin Mary is His chamber, from which he went forth as a bridegroom.

BEDE. Nor is it without some mysterious allusion, that the marriage is related as taking place on the third day. The first age of the world, before the giving of the Law, was enlightened by the example of the Patriarchs; the second, under the Law, by the writings of the Prophets; the third, under grace, by the preaching of the Evangelists, as if by the light of the third day; for our Lord had now appeared in the flesh. The name of the place too where the marriage was held, Cana of Galilee, which means, desire of migrating, has a typical signification, viz. that those are most worthy of Christ, who burn with devotional desires, and have known the passage from vice to virtue, from earthly to eternal things.

The wine was made to fail, to give our Lord the opportunity of making better; that so the glory of God in man might be brought out of its hiding place: And when they wanted wine, the Mother of Jesus said to Him, They have no wine.

CHRYS. But how came it into the mother's mind to expect so great a thing from her Son? for he had done no miracle as yet: as we read afterwards This beginning of miracles did Jesus. His real nature, however, was beginning now to be revealed by John, and His own conversations with His disciples; besides that His conception, and the circumstances of His birth, had from the first given rise to high expectations in her mind: as Luke tells us, His mother kept all these sayings in her heart. Why then did she never ask Him to work a miracle before? Because the time had now come that He should be made known. Before He had lived so much like an ordinary person, that she had not had the confidence to ask Him. But now that she heard that John had borne witness to Him, and that He had disciples, she asks Him confidently.

ALCUIN. She represents here the Synagogue, which challenges Christ to perform a miracle. It was customary with the Jews to ask for miracles.

Jesus said to her, Woman, what is that to me and to thee?

AUG. Some who derogate from the Gospel, and say that Jesus was not born of the Virgin Mary, try to draw an argument for their error from this place; for, how, say they, could she be His mother to whom He said, Woman, what is that to me and to thee? Now who is it who gives this account, and on whose authority do we believe it? The Evangelist John. But he himself says, The Mother of Jesus was there. Why should He say it, unless both were true. But did He therefore come to the marriage to teach men to despise their mother?

CHRYS. That He greatly venerated His mother, we know from St. Luke, who tells us that He was subject unto His parents. For where parents throw no obstacle in the way of God's commands, it is our duty to be subject to them; but when they demand any thing at an unseasonable time, or cut us off from spiritual things, we should not be deceived into compliance.

AUG. To mark a distinction between His Godhead and manhood, that according to His manhood He was inferior and subject, but according to His Godhead supreme, He said, Woman, what is that to me and to thee?

CHRYS. And for another reason, viz. to prevent any suspicion attaching to His miracles: for these it was proper should be asked for by those who wanted them, not by His Mother. He wished to show them that He would perform all in their proper time, not all at once, to prevent confusion; for He said, My hour is not yet come; i.e. I am not yet known to the persons present; nay, they know not that the wine has failed; let them find out that first; he who perceives not his want beforehand, will not perceive when his want is supplied.

AUG. Or it was because our Lord as God had not a mother, though as man He had, and the miracle He was about to work was the act of His Divinity, not of human infirmity. When therefore His mother demanded a miracle, He, as though not acknowledging a human birth, when about to perform a divine work, said, Woman, what is that to me and to thee? As if He said, You did not beget that in Me, which works the miracle, My Divinity. (She is called woman, with reference to the female sex, not to any injury of her virginity.) But because you brought forth My infirmity, I will acknowledge you then, when that very infirmity shall hang on the cross. And therefore He adds, My hour is not yet come: as if to say, I will acknowledge you when the infirmity, of which you are the Mother, shall hang from the cross. He commended His Mother to the disciple, when about to die, and to rise again, before Her death. But note; just as the Manicheans have found an occasion of error and pretext for their faithlessness in our Lord's word, Woman, what is that to me and to thee? In the same way the astrologers support theirs from the words, My hour is not yet come. For, say they, if Christ had not been under the power of fate, He would never have said this. But let them believe what that God says below, I have power to lay it (my life) down, and I have power to take it again: and then let them ask, why He says, My hour is not yet come: nor let them on such a ground subject the Creator of heaven to fate; seeing that, even were there a fatality in the stars, the Maker of the stars could not be under the dominion of the stars. And not only had Christ nothing to do with fate, as you call it; but neither have you, or any other man. Wherefore said He then, My hour is not yet come? Because He had the power to die when He pleased, but did not think it expedient yet to exert the power He was to call the disciples; to proclaim the Kingdom of heaven, to do marvelous works, to approve His divinity by miracles, His humility by partaking of the sufferings of our mortal state. And when He had done all, then the hour was come, not of destiny, but of will, not of obligation, but of power.

CHRYS. Although He had said, My hour is not yet come, He afterwards did what His Mother told Him, in order to show plainly, that He was not under subjection to the hour. For if He was, how could He have done this miracle before the hour appointed for it? In the next place, He wished to show honor to His Mother, and make it appear that He did not go counter to Her eventually. He would not put Her to shame in the presence of so many; especially as She had sent the servants to Him, that the petition might come from a number, and not from Herself only; His mother said to the servants, Whatsoever He says to you, do it.

BEDE; As if She said, Though He appear to refuse, He will do it nevertheless. She knew His pity and mercifulness. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the

manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Hydriae are vessels to hold water: hydor being the Greek for water.

ALCUIN. Vessels to hold water were there, after the manner of the purifying of Jews. Among other traditions of the Pharisees, they observed frequent washings .

CHRYS Palestine being a dry country, with few fountains or wells, they used to fill waterpots with water, to prevent the necessity of going to the river, if they were unclean, and to have materials for washing at hand. To prevent any unbeliever from suspecting that a very thin wine was made by the dregs having been left in the vessels, and water poured in upon them, He says expressly, According to the manner of the purifying of the Jews: which shows that those vessels were never used to hold wine.

AUG. A firkin is a certain measure; as urn, amphora, and the like. Metron is the Greek for measure: whence metreta. Two or three, is not to be taken to mean some holding two, others three, but the same vessels holding two or three.

Jesus said to them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

CHRYS. But why did He not perform the miracle before they had filled the waterpots, which would have been much more wonderful; inasmuch as it is one thing to change the quality of some existing substance, another to make it that substance out of nothing? The latter miracle would be the more wonderful, but the former would be the more easy of belief.

And this principle often acts as a check, to moderate the greatness of our Lord's miracles: He wishes to make them more credible, therefore He makes them less marvelous; a refutation this of the perverse doctrine of some, that He was a different Being from the Maker of the world. For we see He performs most of His miracles upon subject-matter already existing, whereas were He contrary to the Creator of the world, He would not use a material thus alien, to demonstrate His own power.

He did not draw out the water Himself which He made wine, but ordered the servants to do so. This was for the sake of having witnesses of the miracle; And He said to them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast.

ALCUIN. The Triclinium is a circle of three couches, cline signifying couch: the ancients used to recline upon couches. And the Architrclinus is the one at the head of the Triclinium, i.e. the chief of the guests. Some say that among the Jews, He was a priest, and attended the marriage in order to instruct in the duties of the married state.

CHRYS; Or thus; It might be said that the guests were drunken, and could not, in the confusion of their senses, tell whether it were water or wine. But this objection could not be brought against the attendants, who must have been sober, being occupied wholly in performing the duties of their service gracefully and in order. Our Lord therefore bid the attendants bear to the governor of the feast; who again would of course be perfectly sober. He did not say, Give to the guests to drink.

HILARY; Water is poured into the waterpots; wine is drawn out into the chalices; the senses of the drawer out agree not with the knowledge of the pourer in. The pourer in thinks that water is drawn out; the drawer out thinks that wine was poured in. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was,

(but the servants who drew the water knew,) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom. It was not a mixture, but a creation: the simple nature of water vanished, and the flavor of wine was produced; not that a weak dilution was obtained, by means of some strong infusion, but that which was, was annihilated; and that which was not, came to be.

CHRYS. Our Lord wished the power of His miracles to be seen gradually; and therefore He did not reveal what He had done Himself, nor did the ruler of the feast call upon the servants to do so; (for no credit would have been given to such testimony concerning a mere man, as our Lord was supposed to be,) but He called the bridegroom, who was best able to see what was done. Christ moreover did not only make wine, but the best wine. And (the ruler of the feast) said to him, Every man at the beginning does set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but you have kept the good wine until now. The effects of the miracles of Christ are more beautiful and better than the productions of nature. So then that the water was made wine, the servants could testify; that it was made good wine, the ruler of the feast and the bridegroom.

It is probable that the bridegroom made some answer; but the Evangelist omits it, only mentioning what it was necessary for us to know, viz. the water being made wine. He adds, This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee. It was very necessary to work miracles just then, when His devoted disciples were all collected, and present at the place, attending to what was going on.

ID. Should any say that there is not sufficient proof of this being the beginning of miracles, because it is added, in Cana of Galilee, as if some had been preferred elsewhere: we answer, as we did before, that John says below, That He might be made manifest to Israel, therefore have I come baptizing. Now if He had performed miracles in the earlier part of His life, the Jews would not have wanted another person to point Him out. If our Lord in a short time became so distinguished for the number of His miracles, that His Name was known to every one, would He not have been much more so, had He worked miracles from His earliest years? for the things themselves would have been the more extraordinary, being performed by a Child, and in so long a time must have become notorious. It was fit and proper however that He should not begin to work miracles at so early an age: for men would have thought the Incarnation a fantasy, and in the extremity of envy would have delivered Him to be crucified before the appointed time.

AUG. This miracle of our Lord's, turning the water into wine, is no miracle to those who know that God worked it. For the Same that day made wine in the waterpots, Who every year makes wine in the vine: only the latter is no longer wonderful, because it happens uniformly. And therefore it is that God keeps some extraordinary acts in store for certain occasions, to rouse men out of their lethargy, and make them worship Him. Thus it follows, He manifested forth His glory.

ALCUIN. He was the King of glory, and changed the elements because He was their Lord.

CHRYS. He manifests His glory, as far as related to His own act; and if at the time many knew it not, yet was it afterwards to be heard and known of all. And His disciples believed

in Him. It was probable that these would believe more readily, and give more attention to what went on.

AUG. If now for the first time they believed on Him, they were not His disciples when they came to the marriage. This however is a form of speech, such as saying that the Apostle Paul was born in Tarsus of Cilicia; not meaning by this that he was an Apostle then. In the same way when we hear of Christ's disciples being invited to the marriage, we should understand not disciples already, but who were to be disciples.

AUG. But see the mysteries which lie hid in that miracle of our Lord. It was necessary that all things should be fulfilled in Christ which were written of Him: those Scriptures were the water. He made the water wine when He opened to them the meaning of these things, and expounded the Scriptures; for thus that came to have a taste which before had none, and that inebriated, which did not inebriate before.

BEDE; At the time of our Lord's appearing in the flesh, the sweet vinous taste of the law had been weakened by the carnal interpretations of the Pharisees.

AUG. Now if He ordered the water to be poured out, and then introduced the wine from the hidden recesses of creation, He would seem to have rejected the Old Testament. But converting, as He did, the water into wine, He showed us that the Old Testament was from Himself; for it was as by His order that the waterpots were filled. But those Scriptures have no meaning, if Christ be not understood there. Now we know from what time the law dates, viz. from the foundation of the world. From that time to this are six ages; the first reckoning from Adam to Noah; the second, from Noah to Abraham; the third, from Abraham to David; the fourth, from David to the carrying away into Babylon; the fifth, from that time to John the Baptist; the sixth, from John the Baptist to the end of the world. The six waterpots then denote these six ages of prophecy. The prophecies are fulfilled; the waterpots are full. But what is the meaning of their holding two or three firkins apiece? Had He said three only, our minds would have run immediately to the mystery of the Trinity. Nor perhaps can we reject it, even though it is said, two or three: for the Father and the Son being named, the Holy Ghost may be understood by consequence; inasmuch as it is the love between the Father and the Son, which is the Holy Ghost. Nor should we pass over another interpretation, which makes the two firkins alluded to the two races of men, the Jews and the Greeks; and the three to the three sons of Noah.

ALCUIN. The servants are the doctors of the New Testament, who interpret the holy Scripture to others spiritually; the ruler of the feast is some lawyer, as Nicodemus, Gamaliel, or Saul. When to the former then is committed the word of the Gospel, hid under the letter of the law, it is the water made wine, being set before the ruler of the feast. And the three rows of guests at table in the house of the marriage are properly mentioned; the Church consisting of three orders of believers, the married, the continent, and the doctors. Christ has kept the good wine until now, i.e. He has deferred the Gospel till this, the sixth age.

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