

Epiphany II – A Vision for 2010

As the action opens in this morning's Gospel, Jesus and his disciples, family and friends, including Mary his Mother, are at a wedding feast in a town called Cana. The host ran out of wine. In all likelihood, Jesus and Mary were in some way related to the wedding party, because Mary took a keen personal interest in this crisis and stepped up to help fix it. She said to her son, "They have no wine." Perhaps Jesus didn't think they should get involved, for he responded to his Mother, "Woman, what concern is that to you and me? My hour has not come yet." An interesting statement; Jesus seemed to know that her desire to fix the problem was being delegated directly to him: 'Jesus, make it be all better.' I'd like to have seen the expression on his face when he *seemed* to be giving his Mother a negative response. Perhaps there was a twinkle in his eye...perhaps he was even smiling. Whatever occurred between them, instead of letting it go, Mary turned to the servants and simply said, "Do whatever he tells you." Jesus went on to turn copious amounts of water into the best wine that has been served all evening and we are told that he "revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him." (John 2:1-11)

Today is also the day when we celebrate our Patronal Feast Day: The Confession of St. Peter ("You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God"). It is a perfect day for me to preach about my vision for this faith community in 2010 by talking about what this story has to tell us about Mary, Jesus, ourselves, and St. Peter's. So let's unpack the message of this Gospel story bit by bit.

First, let's look at the example of Mary. Clearly, she knows her Son. She seems to know what he is capable of doing and she has complete and utter faith and trust in him that he will do whatever it is that needs to be done. Mary shows us what kind of faith we are to have – no doubts, no second guessing, no trying to figure things out or 'fix' things ourselves. We are to turn to Jesus, make our requests known to him, and cooperative with whatever he tells us to do from that point forward.

Let us also note that what Mary does NOT say and do is as important as what she says and does. Mary does not take any of the credit for what happens. There is not even one little hint in this Gospel story that Mary says, "See what I got him to do? I have a special gift." Mary points to Jesus and so should we.

Second, this story shows us that Jesus listens to his Mother. This story is one of the foundational stories in the Gospels in support of asking Mary to intercede on our behalf. It's like putting a name on the Prayer Chain list, or asking a friend to pray for you. "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us." You don't have to be a Roman Catholic to ask Mary to intercede for you or for those you love.

Jesus also doesn't mess around with little 'stuff' – when he turned the water into wine he didn't just make a single bottle. Jesus made 125 gallons of wine. What's the message in that? It is an image of the *abundance* of God's grace that is available to us if we but ask; the *abundance* of Jesus' love for us if we are open to it. It is an image of the *abundance* of the glory and gratitude and praise that should attend the everyday miracles that are all around us all day if we just open our eyes.

Third, this story tells us not to be afraid to do what Jesus tells us to do – but **ONLY** to do what Jesus tells us to do – not to make things up ourselves and try to take things into our own hands against God's will. That means we need to know what Jesus'

voice sounds like; we need to come to know Jesus Christ intimately. We need to work on our discernment and obedience, both individually and as a faith community.

How does all of this translate into a vision for 2010? I have a trinity of ideas:

1. I (as well as others) would like to see us broaden our understanding of our healing ministries. We need to have deeper clarity about what the sacraments are and how they impact our lives. Through the sacraments, we have access to grace in a particular way. They are a gift from Christ to the Church and I believe we are called to a year of education and practice that will take all our healing ministries to another level. The sacramental grace and the power of healing comes to us through Christ. The glory, gratitude, and praise goes to Christ.
Some of the ideas I've heard and that I support are finding ways to include our young people as ministers of healing; expanding or enhancing our outreach to area nursing homes; focusing on special services; and enhancing our Health Care Ministries. I want to see us do more with intentional prayer: vigils, enlarging the Prayer Chain, and so on. We've only just begun to respond to what Jesus is leading us to do in this area.
2. Let's finish the second phase of our renovation project and get that window put in behind the altar. To me, that's a powerful symbol of 'letting our light shine' and of making our physical space a place where people can see and experience the beauty of creation as well as the healing touch of Christ.
3. Finally, I want us to spend this year celebrating our faith community and one another. We have already listened to and been obedient to Christ in so many ways. So many of us demonstrate quiet obedience and careful discernment. Let's find ways to give thanks more purposefully for our identity as God's beloved people in this place and to deepen, broaden, and strengthen the pillars emerging from the foundations of our faith.

We need to ask Jesus for what we need; do what he tells us to do; trust and obey; and give God the glory, gratitude and praise for all that we have and for all that he is leading us to become in 2010. Amen