

AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION 16th January 2022

2nd Sunday of Epiphany

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

Hymn

1 Holy Spirit, living Breath of God,
breathe new life into my willing soul.
Bring the presence of the risen Lord
to renew my heart and make me whole.
Cause your word to come alive in me;
give me faith for what I cannot see;
give me passion for your purity;
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

2 Holy Spirit, come abide within,
may your joy be seen in all I do.
Love enough to cover every sin
in each thought and deed and attitude:

kindness to the greatest and the least,
gentleness that sows the path of peace.
Turn my strivings into works of grace;
Breath of God, show Christ in all I do.

3 Holy Spirit, from creation's birth,
giving life to all that God has made,
show your power once again on earth,
cause your church to hunger for your ways.
May the fragrance of our prayers arise;
lead us on the road of sacrifice,
that in unity the face of Christ
may be clear for all the world to see.

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At a wedding in Cana, Jesus changed water into wine, and brought joy to a young couple and their guests. All of us have something in our lives that should be changed, in order that we may be better disciples of Jesus. Let us reflect for a moment on what that might be ... Jesus' power is available for us too.

Lord Jesus, you help us to change the water of doubt into the wine of faith.
Lord have mercy. **Lord, have mercy**

You help to change the water of despair into the wine of hope.
Christ have mercy. **Christ, have mercy**

You help us to change the water of selfishness into the wine of love.
Lord have mercy. **Lord, have mercy**

May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins, heal and strengthen us by God's Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect (special prayer for today)

Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new: transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever **Amen**

READINGS 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. Therefore I want you to understand that no one

speaking by the Spirit of God ever says 'Let Jesus be cursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

GOSPEL READING John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

REFLECTION

In today's Gospel reading, we hear of Jesus' first miracle; what John calls his first sign. Unlike many of the stories of Jesus' miracles in the other gospels, this story is more like a parable; a simple story that reveals a much deeper truth.

There are several things going on in this story, and all with a message for us today. First of all, Cana was only a very small place. You would expect the Messiah to perform his first miracle on a much bigger stage, in a much grander setting. But Jesus was all about the taking the ordinary and making it special; working in the lives of ordinary people. And here he was at a wedding; something quite normal. Now, usually the most important people at a wedding are the bride and groom, but we don't even get to know their names in this story; the story is not about them. We hear instead that Mary was there, and some of the disciples. And it is Mary who says to Jesus that the wine has run out; something which for the bridegroom would have been more than mere embarrassment; it would have brought utter shame on him and his family. So, of course Mary wanted to look out for him, just as we would want to look out for our friends and help them out of a difficult situation. So far, so good.

And then we hear Jesus' reply which does seem a little harsh. 'Woman, what concern is that of you or of me?' On the face of it, it looks as if Jesus is not going to do anything to help, and we don't know what Mary actually expected him to do, but we **do** know that she trusted Jesus. Even though it looked at first as if Jesus was not going to help, she trusted him and told the servants to do whatever Jesus told them to do. What a lesson this teaches us about faith. We make our prayers, as we shall do shortly, and while we trust that God will hear them, and answer them, it is not for us to tell him how to answer them, or when.

And when Jesus tells the servants to fill the **six** stone jars with water, (not just the one which was required by Jewish law), we are beginning to see the generosity, the extravagance of God. And the water becomes wine, not just a small amount, but something in the region of six hundred litres; and it is really good wine. So good that the steward, the important one in charge, could not believe it. He was unaware of the truth; the truth that the servants, the lowly, undervalued quite possibly oppressed people knew. And here is another indication of Jesus' upside-down ministry.

There was nothing wrong with the water, water is good. But what Jesus did when he turned it into wine, was he took something good, water, and made it better. And that is what he does with us. He takes us and transforms us into something better. As Paul points out in his letter to the Christians in Corinth, we have all been given gifts by God; different gifts, and all equally valuable. We are like the stone jars. God has filled us to overflowing with gifts which are like the water. We can keep those gifts to ourselves; or we can offer them back to God and use them in his service. It is then that they then become like the wine. And we ourselves are also transformed. **Amen**

Prayers:

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples, 'I am with you always'.

Be with us today, as we offer ourselves to you. Hear our prayers for others and for ourselves, and keep us in your care. **Amen**

Great God of all time and space, fill the Church with such joy in believing that all Christians overflow with love, compassion, generosity and humility. Let us walk in your way and live your life. **Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Great God of power and justice, fill the arenas of leadership and conflict with sharpened consciences and with courage, so that wise decisions are made, needs met and wrongs righted. **Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Great God of gentleness and truth, fill every home with new insight and greater understanding. Breaking down the divisive barriers and build up our capacity to love. **Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Great God of attentive caring, fill us with your practical compassion; may all who suffer be heard, comforted and cared for. Heal both their situation and our hardness of heart. **Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Great God of unending being, fill death with your life and the dying with hope in you. Prepare us for the life that lasts for ever by bringing us closer to you.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Great God of all creation, fill our mouths with praises and our hearts with gratitude, for all the glory that surrounds us.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayers by Susan Sayers

Gathering together all our prayers, we say the prayer that Jesus gave us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen**

Hymn

1 Christ is our light! the bright and morning star
covering with radiance all from near and far.
Christ be our light, shine on, shine on we pray
into our hearts, into our world today.

2 Christ is our love! baptized that we may know
the love of God among us, swooping low.
Christ be our love, bring us to turn our face
and see in you the light of heaven's embrace.

3 Christ is our joy! transforming wedding guest!
Through water turned to wine the feast was blessed.
Christ be our joy; your glory let us see,
as your disciples did in Galilee.

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We give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to be with us now

**Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen**

We pray God's blessing on each other

May the Holy Spirit touch your hearts so that you may share with one another the wine of unselfish love. May the Lord, who brought joy to the couple at Cana, bless you with the gifts of joy and peace. And may you go on growing in the knowledge and love of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you and those whom you love and pray for, and remain with you, this day and for evermore. **Amen**