

Let me tell you about my imaginary friend Jonathan. He's here today, along with his wife Martha, sitting out there someplace, I don't know where. . . . One can't actually see one's imaginary friends you know. He's something of a curmudgeon, he's rather proud of that I think, and he keeps a running commentary on everything I say. He acts like I can't hear him but, he's an imaginary friend, I hear everything he says! It's all good though. Disagreeable as he may seem, he does keep me on track.

Anyway, here we are at the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time. *“Martha, how can he say this is the second Sunday when we never did the first?”* And if you're wondering what happened to the First Sunday of Ordinary Time, last week's feast of the Baptism of the Lord serves, liturgically, as kind of a multi-purpose Sunday. It ends the Christmas season but also marks the beginning of Ordinary Time.

What is perhaps more surprising is that today's celebration continues the theme of the Epiphany! *“Epiphany!”* says Jonathan, *“What is wrong with that man? I didn't hear anything in today's gospel about three kings bearing gifts!”* Most people, I think, associate the Epiphany with the magi coming from the East, but the word 'epiphany' actually means 'manifestation' and there are three gospel passages the Church has traditionally associated with the Epiphany because they specially illustrate the manifestation, or revelation, of Jesus as Son of God and Savior of the World: the visit of the Magi, the Baptism of the Lord and today's gospel of the Marriage Feast at Cana.

“That's only two out of three, Martha! Guys from foreign lands coming to worship him, the Spirit showing up as a dove and the Father's voice saying 'This is my beloved Son' at his baptism, that I can see, but what does Jesus going to a wedding have to do with it? Turning water into wine isn't that big a miracle!”

You may question how the events at the Marriage Feast to be singled out as revealing anything about Jesus. Helping a guy avoid embarrassment. Turning water into wine doesn't seem like much compared to making the blind see or the deaf hear. But look at the interaction between him and his mother. *“He was pretty rude to her if you ask me!”*

It may seem rude that he seemed to refuse her request but notice that it didn't faze her at all. She went right ahead and told the servants *“Do whatever he tells you.”* And Jesus responded to her request as if that's what he intended all along. What if they were being playful? What if he was looking for the right time to start revealing who he is and Mary, ever encouraging, was suggesting this could be the time. *“They have no WI-ine.”* And Jesus says with an innocent look: *“How does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.”* *“But he called her 'woman!’,”* says Jonathan, *“like he didn't even know her, or he was trying to keep her at a distance! She's his mother! She deserves better than that!”*

You know, there's a fascinating thing about Jesus calling his mother “woman” here. There's only one other time he does that. It's when his hour has come. It's when he's

hanging on the cross giving himself for the ones he loves. She's standing there at the foot of the cross with the beloved disciple and Jesus says "Woman, behold thy son."

Another famous Bible character get's called 'woman.' It's in the book of Genesis. God has just created Eve from Adam's side. He wakes up, sees her, and says "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; This one shall be called 'woman.'" Mary is the new Eve. Jesus gave her to us as the new "mother of all the living" making us all his brothers and sisters!

But it's even better than that. When Jesus provided the wine at the wedding feast he was doing a bridegroom's job in his culture. He provided the superior wine. Symbolically that says Jesus is the true bridegroom come to wed his bride, the Church! The wedding was consummated on the cross where he gave himself completely for us. He gives himself still in the Sacrament of his body and blood.

Jonathan is silent. I think I know why. He's pretty crusty on the outside, but he deeply loves his wife Martha. He would give his life for her. I imagine he just realized that his love for Martha, in a small way, represents God's love for him, and for us all. Isaiah said it hundreds of years before: "As a young man marries a virgin, your Builder shall marry you; and as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride so shall your God rejoice in you."

Always remember that. No matter what your state in life, no matter who you are, your God rejoices in you!