

Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it. And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now."

Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him. After this, he and his mother, (his) brothers, and his disciples went down to Capernaum and stayed there only a few days.

Description: Jesus in the forefront of the Wedding party. This stained glass window depicts waiters near the wine jugs.

Reflection: The wine had run out and Mary was concerned over this dilemma. She showed compassion and sensitivity to the embarrassing situation. Her thoughts were on the bride and groom. What were they to do? Mary took Jesus aside and asked him to do something before the guests became aware that there was no more wine. Jesus told the waiters to fill the jugs to the brim with water. As they began to pour from the jugs they noticed it was not water but the very best vintage wine. This was the first public miracle performed by Jesus and it was done at the request of Mary, his mother. You, too, can ask Jesus for favors through the intercession of Mary.

One of the unique parts of John's opening gospel is the mimic of the seven days of creation. "In the beginning" begins Genesis and John. On the seventh day in Genesis God rested on the seventh day in John he celebrates. For John the past



revelation is like water. You need it to live to survive. But God is not just asking us to live and survive he is inviting us to celebrate. The new

creation takes the old and transforms it into wine for celebration. The ceremonial washing jug represents the old vision of life. The water transformed to wine at the wedding reminds us that when the human heart joins to another and dies to itself in a marriage of oneness with creation then life becomes a celebration. No longer do I live for myself but for others. Wine is water made to celebrate. Not just for sustaining life but for celebrating life. We were not created just to live but to dance with the Lord.

When we live life with the help of God life becomes a celebration, but trying to live on our own life becomes like water just surviving. In the old order Adam tilled the soil. In the new order Nathaniel dances with Jesus at a wedding celebration of heaven and earth.



Dear Lord, help me to see the times in my life I settle for only water. Open my heart to experience your invitation for celebration. Help me to marry my life to yours so that all I hope for and desire can die and all you hope for and desire for me can become a reality. Teach me to dance with you. And to sing the song that only you have placed in my heart.

XIX. THE NATIVITY

LUKE 2: 1-20

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled.

This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

While they were there, the time came

for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock.

The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear.

The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."

So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.

Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.

Description: Jesus Mary and Joseph, Shepherds and Angles, The Nativity

Reflection: After a long and tiring journey, Joseph could not find a room in Bethlehem for Mary to rest. They had to settle in a cave to await the birth of the Christ child. When the child arrived, the news spread to the shepherds as they were tending their sheep. Angels hovered over them singing, "Glory to God in the highest." When the shepherds found the child with Mary and Joseph, they knelt down in adoration. They felt comfortable in this simple setting, while witnessing an awesome scene.

Sometimes we forget the simple things of life. We take for granted the daily opportunities that God gives us to better ourselves and to do good for others. We don't need angels to point the way to Christ. We can find him in prayer, in the sacraments, and in our hearts. Ask the holy family to help you on your journey of life.

We end our pilgrimage with the nativity, a new birth of God's presence in our lives. A new fragile grace wrapped in swaddling clothes waiting to be experienced and acknowledged as God's presence in our life, a new dwelling place of God

being held in our hands. Today in the city of your heart a savior has been born.



The Angel's song "Glory to God in the Highest and on Earth Peace" gives voice to one of the deepest cries of the human spirit. We have prayed for 2,000 years that one day there will be peace on earth. But we pray for a peace that the world cannot give. As we gaze upon the Nativity we pray filled with hope and joy. Remember that it is only the Lord who can give this peace. It is a gift that is available to any heart that will be open to receive it. During the Season of Christmas, we remember the birth of a King. But too often we forget that this Kingdom is not of this world and it is when we place all our hope and trust in this world that we get discouraged. Once again, we are called to remember that we are part of this world yet apart from this world. As this pilgrimage comes to a close, reflect on what is needed to begin a new life with Christ reigning in our hearts. Jesus prayed "thy Kingdom come". It has not yet come.

Christmas did not bring the Kingdom to fulfillment. In fact, the lack of recognition of the Christ is one of the major

themes of the infancy narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Another theme is that on our own, we cannot bring about the Kingdom of God. God himself will bring about the Kingdom. We must be ready when it comes. May this be our prayer as we end our pilgrimage. May we have the courage to live in the unfolding Kingdom of God - a kingdom that no person can bring about, but only receive as a gift from God. The Father will gift the kingdom.

What a wonderful mystery began to unfold that Holy Night so long ago. Amidst the noise and confusion, of daily living a fragile gift of Love was given. Hidden in the ordinary was the extraordinary. The next day many went on as if nothing had changed but for the few who saw, and experienced that night their lives would never be the same. Remember, "To you is born this day a Savior"

✠ CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Lord, amidst my own confusion and noise of daily living, help me to remember a fragile gift is still being given. Hidden in my own ordinary moments is an extraordinary gift of Love just waiting to be experienced and shared. Lord, I need your help to experience what is already present in my midst. Please awaken within me Your deep and abiding love that is made present in the Christmas Event. Help me to seek Your love in my daily life by taking time to quiet the noise and confusion around me. May the hope offered by this pilgrimage change my life. Then, what has freely been given to me, may I generously, share with my Parish in the coming year. That all may grow in Christ's Presence and His Love. We ask this through Christ our Lord Amen.

