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If you will allow me the reference I shall share with you the only episode I remember seeing of the show *The Golden Girls*. It is the episode that centers around the feisty Sicilian Sophia sitting at her kitchen table, trying to turn water into wine with the Pope's ring. She had stolen Pope John Paul II's ring during his visit to Miami. Sophia was determined to ask the Pope to pray for her friend who was in the hospital. Later in the episode, Sophia explains that while she was at Mass, she sneaked into the handicapped section. When the Pope arrived, he came to that section, and she bent down to kiss his ring. As she went to kiss his ring, security arrived to whisk the Pope away. Sophia returned home from Mass and flaunted her new found treasure: Pope John Paul II's ring. She was eventually talked into returning the ring, but before Sophia returned it, she tried to test out its powers, waving her hand over a glass of water, to see if it would turn into wine, and then when the miracle failed to transpire she said "Worth a shot."

Today's Epiphany, where we find Jesus attending a wedding in Cana of Galilee and turning water into wine has certainly caught the world's imagination from time immemorial as the kind of miraculous wonder or magic trick that Sophia wanted to perform. But today's miracle is no magic trick, although the miracle he performs is a friendly, down-home, fireside chat kind of miracle, not quite at the same dramatic level as the creation of a new planet or the healing of an illness or the resuscitation of the dead. The miracle at Cana precludes an imminent social embarrassment and wedding feast disaster. The problem is that the host of the wedding reception has run out of wine at the height of the party. When Jesus' mother informs him that they have no more wine, Jesus seems annoyed, "Woman, what has this to do with me and thee?" Nevertheless, he proceeds to prevent the disaster by changing an enormous amount of water into an equally enormous amount of wine, around 120-180 gallons worth of wine to be exact. And note this detail: the water jars that held the water that Jesus turned into wine were used for Jewish ritual purification. That means that he had

turned water into wine from water that had been used to cleanse the hands and feet of the wedding guests. And in spite of using this purification water for the miracle, the wine that Jesus made was good wine, exceptional wine, better than the wine that had been served at the beginning of the feast.

The *Miracle of Cana* is an Epiphany of Jesus as God. God the Father makes water into wine in nature through a series of steps. He sends the rain that waters grapes which are eventually crushed, fermented, mixed with water and made into wine. Jesus starts with water and ends with wine, but he does a new thing and short-circuits what normally happens in between. Jesus heals the sick, cleanses the lepers, raises the dead, and feeds the crowds with bread from heaven. Of course, all of this had been done before through the prophets and the giving of Manna in the wilderness during the Exodus of the Jewish people. But this turning water into wine is something entirely new to Jewish history. This miracle reveals that he has control over natural processes of creation. This miracle reveals that he is not merely man but the God-man, the Creator and Ruler of Creation, *through whom all things were made*. So St. John reports, *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory*, that is to say, the miracle revealed and showed forth that Jesus Christ was God in Man made manifest. It shows us too that Jesus is in the business of transformation; He takes what is common and makes it into good wine. Jesus is God in the flesh and God in the flesh intends always to take common and coarse things, like fallen human nature, and to convert it to His Goodness, Truth, and Beauty. God in the flesh intends always to be making new wine, the new wine that makes new hearts aware of His power and touched by His love.

The miracle at Cana is a picture of God transforming a small misfortune into joy. Weddings in those days were an event that everyone attended, and which lasted for up to seven days. To run out of wine during the feasting would have been an embarrassment and seen as a bad omen for the newlyweds. The Miracle that Jesus performs is also a

mercy, for in turning water into good wine, the threat of running out of wine is overshadowed by the joy of giving even better wine. This all points to something much larger, the way that God transforms all sadness into joy. The last wine is better than the first. It is important to remember that God does this when difficult things happen. We have all wondered why God allows bad things to happen. Such questions are difficult to answer, but impossible to answer if we do not remember that God can take the saddest situation and transform it into joy, as if it had never been. God takes an impending disaster and uses it to convert us to His Goodness, Beauty, and Truth. God takes a potential loss and makes it a gain. And all the while, He longs only for us to supplicate His mercy and attend to His will.

This is one of the first lessons that the disciples learned about Jesus. The last sentence of today's Gospel says that when the disciples saw this miracle, *they believed on Him*. They of course could not grasp the fullness of what this miracle meant, that this overwhelming display of power was a showing forth of Divine Wisdom. The whole of our Lord's example in what He was doing was no doubt for their practical instruction. Just as the water had been transformed into wine, they were to be transformed in all their own hearts and lives by Him, by His Divine power.

How do we invite Christ to transform our lives? We approach Him simply as His Mother does, and say "My Lord, we have no wine...we have no joy...no peace." We must invite Him into our lives, our marriages, our homes, our friendships, so that He can transform our lives into lives which honor Him and His heavenly kingdom. Then we must follow His Mother's advice, as she said to the servants, *do whatsoever He tells you*. For if we take our cares to Christ and submit ourselves to obey His will and believe that He can provide, that He does have the solution for our needs, then we will be rewarded with not just the illusion of a cheap magic trick, but a supernatural and profound transformation. Amen