

In the rock opera Jesus Christ Superstar, King Herod is presented as something of a buffoon, and when Jesus is brought before him on trial he sings, "Prove to me that you're divine/Change my water into wine."

Of course, Herod misses the point. Jesus' miracles are not conjuring tricks to impress or even to prove his divinity. As the evangelist John states clearly in his gospel the changing of water into wine is a "sign". The Johannine meaning of the word "sign" carries deep theological meaning. The American scripture scholar Dianne Bergant comments: "The miracles of Jesus were never mere exhibitions of supernatural power. They were always revelations of the in-breaking of the reign of God".

In this first sign recorded in John's gospel the changing of water into wine is rich in theological significance. For example, the water is contained in vessels set aside for the Jewish rites of purification. From this we can understand the religious significance of the miracle. Jesus is the fulfilment of all the messianic desires of Israel, the wine, that replaces the water set aside for ritual ablutions, now becomes a sign of the kingdom – wine being a symbol of joy.

The signs of Jesus are not meant to impress but to elicit faith. Mary, the mother of the Lord, ignores the seeming rebuke of Jesus and orders the servants to do as Jesus commands. Mary initiates the miracle and it is her faith that makes this possible. Mary's demonstration of her faith in Jesus will later be then taken up by his disciples. But it is Mary who is the primary model of faith.

Over the last three weeks we have celebrated the theme of epiphany, or the manifestation of God in Jesus. Beginning the feast of the Epiphany, followed by the Baptism of the Lord and concluding in today's gospel where we read: "Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him."

***Peace & blessings,
Gerard***