



# TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*on the Branford Green*

May you find Christ, Community and Compassion within these historic walls.

## Seeing Miracles

By The Rev. Sharon Gracen

January 20, 2013

The theme of Epiphany is revelation. On the feast of the Epiphany, God is revealed to the world outside of Judaism in the vulnerable infant born into humble circumstances. One the first Sunday after the Epiphany, a thundering voice from heaven reveals the adult Jesus as the beloved son with the spirit of wisdom resting on him. This week, as a guest at a wedding in Cana, Jesus reveals something slightly more subtle and mysterious. This is no public miracle, witnessed by many, but a more nuanced look into what makes things holy. Along with Jesus' mother, the only ones who were wise to the miracle were the servants who filled the stone jars with water for washing. When the steward tasted the wine, they knew that something out of the ordinary had happened; everyone else was just happy for the really fine Pinot Noir, and apparently none the wiser.

In this quiet miracle in Cana, a backwater village so small that it doesn't show up on any maps, Jesus reveals the holiness that already exists in all things, even in a place like Cana. Water is turned into wine to emphasize how holy it is, to encourage us to think more deeply about the sacred in all things.

Certainly on the one hand we might be inclined to take water for granted. Here in New England, water is commonplace in our lives and is supplied to us with great regularity and through many means. But on the other hand, there is so much that is awesomely complex, unique, and special about water. Water is essential for our survival, it serves as a critical method of transportation, and it provides us with so much of the earth's beauty. Poets, philosophers, and lately even social scientists have long extolled the psychic benefits of abiding near living streams, lakes, and oceans. But think what else happens with water. When it freezes under certain atmospheric conditions, it produces snowflakes, each one completely unique in its crystalline structure and reflective beauty. In that way, it is holy, just as each of us, in our own special personalities, talents, and spiritual journeys, is uniquely holy.

Sometimes this holy transformation of water to snowflake is so fleeting that we get only a glimpse before the warmth of our hands returns it to the state of ordinary water, but even so it makes you wonder, "did I see really see that beautiful, holy snowflake?" "Was it some sort of illusion?" No it wasn't illusion; it was the holy that is hidden in the water of life. And so it is that all around us is wonder disguised as the commonplace.

Gerard Sloyan is the author of one of the commentaries on the Gospel of John, which I keep in my office. He describes what begins with the miracle at Cana in a rather paradoxical way. Those who witnessed were changed, but they still existed in a world that had not. They began to live what Sloyan calls "a life within a life." Nothing is changed but everything is changed. What had been water is wine. Word has become flesh. An hour that has not yet come is here. This is existence at the edge of the ages, a point at which the old eon and the new dance turn into a figured minuet. What will be *is*. What seems to be *is no more*."

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Carrie Newcomer, my favorite and often quoted singer/songwriter has a lovely song about geodes, and it is interesting what not only what she wrote in the song but about it:

"My home in Southern Indiana is a rolling green land abundant in limestone and the mysterious rocks called geodes. Geodes are so copious in this part of the state that we pile them in our gardens and think of them as commonplace. I am fascinated with these unassuming brown and grey stones that contain inside them a sparkling center of quartz crystals. They are surprising beautiful and a wonderful metaphor. They remind me to look deeper, because often within what may appear quite ordinary is a core of beauty and mystery. Sometimes I will take visiting friends on muddy walks along the hills and hollows of my home pointing out the creek beds full of geodes. Often they confess that if I hadn't pointed out these unadorned stones their presence would have been missed entirely. But once familiar with the signature lumpy look of geodes these friends begin to see the stones everywhere. This is how paying attention works. At first I have to look quite deliberately to find the sparkling center of things, but eventually I begin to notice the patterns and come to expect the unexpected."

Wow, I love that. What great and powerful wisdom. And what this story of the wedding feast at Cana ultimately promises us is that change, which is never ending, is essential because it continues to reveal what is holy in everything. With change we begin to see more and more of what is already holy in the commonplace. Just as Christ is revealed, so will we be revealed as holy ones already living in his world. As we believe in—remember that means what we give our hearts to—this continual transformation of our awareness, we see the holy in what surrounds us more easily. We become geodes, holding the crystalline beauty just waiting to be revealed, and in doing so, we bring gladness to a broken world.

The wedding at Cana is just one of the miraculous acts that Jesus undertook to demonstrate the presence of the holy in our world, but it reflects a larger reality as well. I believe that the Incarnation opens our eyes to the holy that already exists, not just in the physical reality that confronts us in our daily lives. Christmas is not the event that makes us worthy to play host to the Christ child. Instead, God says, you are worthy for this holy one to walk with you, to be with you, to be one of you. The Incarnation asks us to open our eyes and see who we really are, part of the divine Imagination from the very outset. You are the neighbors, brothers, and sisters of the Prince of Heaven. He is you and you are he. We may not remember or act that way all the time, but this truth dwells within us, it lies beneath an ordinary exterior, it is holiness revealed, as close as our breath.

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