

## Mission Reflection

for the Season of Epiphany



Seafarers International House

### Scripture

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.<sup>1</sup>

### Message

It has been said that reading the Gospel of John is a little like watching the TV show “Lost” — things are not always as they seem.

The conventional wisdom is that one serves the good wine or the expensive spirits first, and after a couple of rounds, the host opens up a bottle of lesser quality - not necessarily swill, but definitely a step down. After all, why waste your very dear bottle on people who are already buzzed and will not be able to discern the difference. None of us would do that, of course, but it is the conventional wisdom.

So, imagine the chief steward’s surprise when, at the reception’s eleventh hour, several cases of Chateau Mouton Rothschild 2006 Pauillac are delivered, causing him to ask, “Just what were you saving this for?”

The prevailing theme throughout John’s Gospel is the dawning of a new age, and according to one theologian, this Gospel passage is not “about an obedient son reluctantly doing what his mother asked, nor was it about Jesus making sure the host of the wedding was not embarrassed by the wine running out, nor was

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it about making sure those attending the party were able to keep drinking. It's about Jesus taking good things from the past and transforming them into other good things for the future<sup>2</sup> — specifically, our redemption and salvation through the crucified and risen Jesus Christ.

Our question for 2016 might be why are we squirreling away this Good News? What are we saving it for? Might each of us resolve to share hospitality and a random act of kindness at least once this new year with a stranger encountered in the community: a simple greeting, a cup of coffee, a bus or subway ticket or assistance for one needing directions. Your gesture may be received with more gratitude than you might have ever imagined. Indeed, you may have entertained an angel.

There are surely a host of people in our neighborhood or community who could use a little hospitality. Just once in 2016, try it.

### *Prayer*

Lord, in this season of Epiphany, we look for a sign, a manifestation of your presence among us. Help us to overcome reticence and fear. Help us to be the hands that do your work. Let us not save, but instead share, our very best selves with the world around us. Amen

1. *John 2:1-11*
2. *Rev. Dr. Delmer L. Chilton, "A Sign from God" LIVING LUTHERAN, January 14, 2013*

Postscript: Seafarers International House can't get you on board a merchant ship to visit seafarers due to port security restrictions. But we can get you into an immigrant detention center to visit a person seeking asylum from persecution in his or her homeland. Typically, asylum seekers wait six or more months to have their asylum claim processed. During those months, they are kept in a warehouse under constant surveillance with limited visitation privileges. We lead monthly visits to the Elizabeth Detention Center, and you cannot imagine how profoundly grateful the detained person is for a brief visit. Hospitality is transforming for both the visited and the visitor. Call 212-677-4800 for more information. Get a head start on this New Year resolution!

**Seafarers International House serves seafarers and immigrants with pastoral care, hospitality, social assistance, advocacy and prayer in the ports in Baltimore, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York and Philadelphia, and in an 84-room Guesthouse in Manhattan. The Guesthouse accommodates more than seafarers and immigrants. It's available for church gatherings, civic groups and individuals in need of safe, affordable lodging. Our Guesthouse helps them accomplish their mission goals, and their patronage helps us accomplish ours. "Sleep Well By Doing Good."**

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