We celebrate the hidden glory of God.

- Today’s gospel tells the story of Jesus’ first public miracle at a wedding in Cana.
- So many Bible stories have serious settings that children can be relieved to hear a Bible story in which Jesus enjoys himself at a good party!
- In today’s core session, we celebrate the story of Jesus at a party.

Question of the Week
What might we do to celebrate Jesus’ joyous presence with us?
Getting Started (5-10 minutes)
Gather children around items used in a celebration: a fancy tablecloth, birthday hats or streamers, party plates, etc. Pass the items around for the children to examine and touch.

Ask when we might use these items. Accept all the children’s answers, but emphasize those that describe special occasions, such as birthday parties, weddings or Christmas.

Explain that we often use these things at parties or celebrations. They are all special signs of a party.

God sends signs, too. Miracles from God are signs, like these special items. Miracles are signs of God’s love. Explain that today’s story has a special party—and a special miracle, too.

Gospel Story (5-10 minutes)
Wedding in Cana
Story Focus: You can use the Creative Drama activity attached to this document to help primary children understand the cultural setting of today’s gospel.

Time for a party! Time for a wedding! Mary, Jesus and Jesus’ friends walk to the wedding party in Cana. The party will last for at least a week—and maybe two!

“There will be plenty of music,” says Mary.

“There will be plenty of dancing,” says Jesus.

“There will be plenty of good food,” says Peter.

“There will be plenty of good wine,” says John.

When they get to the wedding, the party begins. There is plenty of music. Plenty of dancing. Plenty of good food. But Mary walks up to Jesus and says, “Something’s wrong. The wine has run out.”

“Oh, no,” says Peter. “The people who gave the party will be so ashamed.”

Mary turns to servants who are standing near and says, “Do whatever Jesus tells you.”

Jesus points to six large stone jars and tells the servants, “Fill up these jars with water.” The servants fill the jars to the very top.

Jesus says, “Now take some water out and bring it to the man in charge of this party.” The servants do as Jesus says.

The man in charge tastes the water and says, “What delicious wine!” Jesus has turned the water into wine! Only the servants and Mary and Jesus’ friends know what Jesus has done. And they say, “See what power he has. Surely he comes from God!”

Story-Review Game (5-15 minutes)
Ask one or more volunteers to use black markers or crayons to draw 10 empty jars on newsprint.

Ask a story-review question, such as:
- Who is going to the party? (Mary, Jesus and Jesus’ friends)
- What kind of party is it? (a wedding)
- What drink is served at the wedding? (wine)
- What goes wrong with the wine? (It ran out.)
- Who says to the servants, “Do whatever Jesus tells you.” (Mary)
- What does Jesus tell the servants to fill? (six stone water jars)
- With what do the servants fill the jars? (water)
- What does the man in charge taste? (wine)
- Who changes the water into wine? (Jesus)
- Who knows that Jesus has done a miracle? (Mary, the servants and Jesus’ friends)

Let the first child to answer correctly use a purple marker or crayon to fill the jar with “wine.” Ask each child to answer only one question—but encourage children who have drawn to help the other children answer, too.

Continue asking questions until children have filled all the jars with wine.

Praying Together (5 minutes)
Invite children to thank God for the parties and celebrations they enjoy.

Close by praying:
- Thank you, God, for celebrations. Thank you for miracles and for all your signs of love to us. Help us show your love to others. Amen.

Note: If you use At Home with the Good News, either distribute this week’s papers to the children before they leave or e-mail the papers to their families.
Welcome the Good News
(10-15 minutes)
On page 1 of today’s Welcome the Good News you’ll find an illustrated version of today’s story.

In Welcome God’s Word on page 2, children look up the story in John 2 and imagine themselves present at Cana. Children will also find an activity called With Your Family that they can lead at home.

Singing Together (5-10 minutes)
From Singing the Good News you and the children can sing together:
◆ “Water Into Wine” (p. 34 of the songbook)

Note: To access both the songbook and its attached MP3 files, open your Winter-C Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Singing the Good News.

You can also teach children to sing the following song to the tune of “Did You Ever See a Lassie?”:

Oh, once there was a wedding, a wedding, a wedding,
Oh, once there was a wedding,
In Galilee town.
And Jesus came to dine,
Changed water to new wine,
Oh, once there was a wedding, in Galilee town.

Art (10-15 minutes)
Ringgold’s Tar Beach 2
Place the poster Tar Beach 2, attached to this document, where children can see and touch it. You’ll explore the poster more than once this season. We use the poster in this session as a way to help children explore the theme of meals together.

Ask children to talk about what they see on the poster.
Questions:
◆ What colors do you see?
◆ What people do you see?
◆ What are the people doing?
◆ What food do you see?
◆ If you could be there, what would you want to eat?

Bible Skills for Third Graders
(10-15 minutes)
Help children use the Table of Contents, chapter and verse numbers to find John 2:1-11 in their Bibles. Ask the children to follow along as you read the passage aloud. Invite children to solve a Wordsearch Puzzle based on the scripture passage.

Distribute pencils and copies of the Wordsearch Puzzle attached to this document. Ask children to work together to find the listed words in two places—in the puzzle itself and in the scripture passage.
Children and the Gospel

Today’s gospel tells the story of Jesus’ first public miracle: he changes water into wine at a wedding in Cana. For children, there can be a special appeal in the image of Jesus at a party. Church is so unlike any parties that children attend! Today’s gospel offers them a helpful image of Jesus, fully human, enjoying music and play with friends, just as they do.

Sometimes people extend this metaphor to the Eucharist, speaking of it as a party or celebration. This language is difficult for children. They don’t associate parties with being made to sit still for long periods of time.

A more useful metaphor for the Eucharist for children can be Thanksgiving dinner, a time when a larger family comes together to give thanks as they share both stories and food.

Doyle’s “Leaping”

In the session for the Baptism of the Lord, we explored the waters of Baptism. Water figures in today’s gospel, too, where the abundant water is unexpectedly changed to wine. In the excerpt below, Brian Doyle, editor of Portland Magazine and an award-winning Catholic author, meditates on water.

Here in the Far Corner the autumnal rains have begun to spill from the sky, and water sluices over land and people, cleansing both, reminding us that we begin in water, are baptized by water, are composed of water. Water is our cousin and our cousin is back in town, his burbling visit forcing us back inside house and heart, back to a chair by the fire, back to contemplation of the ways of water in the stories of the Son who came to us…

Staring out the window at the gray corduroy sky, one thinks of that stern Voice falling down in praise upon his Son, and suddenly the rafts of rain do not seem onerous but holy, do not seem an affliction but an extraordinary gift; this is the water of life, and we drink from it so that we may live, in him, with him, until the waters part and there is nothing but Light.

Excerpt from LEAPING: REVELATIONS AND EPICPHANIES
by Brian Doyle (Loyola Press 2003)
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To order copies of this book, call 1-800-621-1008 or visit www.LoyolaBooks.org.

Where You’ll Find Everything Else

◆ Attached to this Session Plan you will find:
  — Backgrounds and reflections for today’s readings, titled More about Today’s Scriptures.
  — A Creative Drama activity you can use in today’s session to invite children to explore the setting of today’s gospel story about the wedding in Cana.
  — A Wordsearch Puzzle to use in today’s Bible Skills activity.
  — A copy of today’s Gospel Story to hand out to children or e-mail to their families.
  — This week’s At Home with the Good News to hand out to children or e-mail to their families.
  — Ringgold’s Tar Beach 2, to be used in today’s Art activity.
◆ Open your Winter-C Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Seasonal Articles to find:
  — Information on Winter-C’s Models of the Faith.
  — An article for catechists and/or families titled Learning through Music.
  — An article for catechists and/or families titled Learning through the Visual Arts.
  — An article for catechists and/or families titled The Many Meanings of Scripture.
  — An article for catechists and/or families further exploring Paul’s Corinthian Letters.
  — The Introduction for Primary for Living the Good News.
More about Today’s Scriptures

Today’s readings speak of the revelation of hidden glory, breaking through, inviting celebration. Isaiah announces the coming glory of God’s vindicated people when they return to rebuild their shattered homeland. Paul describes the amazing results of spiritual gifts, given to all God’s people “for the common good.” The wedding feast at Cana relates the first “sign” of Jesus’ nature and ministry, a sign that, as John puts it, “revealed his glory.”

Isaiah 62:1-5
This reading may have been written after the exiled Israelites had returned from Babylon. Rebuilding their devastated homeland (61:4) was a difficult task, and the people grew weary and disillusioned. The prophet intercedes for the disheartened people in assurance that the Lord will fulfill the promise of restoration.

Reflecting God’s tenacity, the prophet stubbornly refuses to give up or to maintain the status quo; he will work tirelessly for Jerusalem’s promised vindication. Jerusalem will receive a new name (60:14)—as had Abram, Sarai and Jacob—to mark its new life. The prophet describes the Lord’s relationship to the people as a marriage bond (as did the prophet Hosea). The land shall be called Beulah (62:4), which means ‘married’; in joy the Lord will marry Israel again.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11
Today’s reading begins a sequence of readings from this letter during the weeks after Epiphany. The beginning of this chapter, “now concerning...” indicates that Paul is taking up another of the questions posed to him by the Corinthian community (7:1, 25; 8:1; 16:1, 12).

In chapters 12–14, Paul discusses spiritual gifts. The Corinthian community was torn by dissension over the nature, use and apportionment of such gifts. Paul emphasizes that these are gifts of grace to all, not the personal or private possession only of certain people.

Paul points out the triune operation of God in spiritual gifts: the Holy Spirit as the Giver (12:4), Jesus as the One to whom service is given (12:5) and God the Father as the One at work in the gift (12:6). The gifts are complementary and meant for the common good; no one gift is more valuable than another.

John 2:1-11
The story of the wedding at Cana is full of hints of multiple meanings. It is an epiphany story, the first of the “signs” that manifest the power and presence of God in Jesus’ acts.

The setting of a wedding feast echoes both the marriage bond between God and Israel and the messianic banquet at the end of time. Jesus’ interchange with his mother is not disrespectful (19:26), but is a Semitic way of expressing a disassociation of common interests. Jesus’ “hour,” set by divine plan, is the final revelation of his glory in the passion and crucifixion (7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1). Jesus reminds Mary that his mission is not to fulfill human desires but God’s will. Though he responds to Mary’s plea, he does so in cooperation with the purposes of his ministry.

The essential features of this “sign” are: the failure of the old (2:3); its replacement by a vast supply (2:6) of the new (abundance was to be a feature of the last days); and the superiority of the new (2:10). The replacement symbolizes Jesus’ transformation of the old order of ritual purification and of the Torah, which water symbolized, into the new order of purification through the cross, through the blood (1 John 1:7) and through new teaching.
Reflection

“They have no wine.” Mary’s statement encompasses more than the immediate, physical need to keep the wedding reception rolling. As Elizabeth Johnson points out in *Truly our Sister*, it is a painful reminder of the scarcity in which Galilean peasants lived under Roman occupation. For once they wanted to escape their grinding poverty and celebrate—until the wine ran out. Mary’s initiative prompts a bountiful abundance—simple math suggests 120 gallons of the finest vintage!

Furthermore, Mary’s words describe the situation of countless people around the world today. “They have no wine,” nor health care, safety, food, jobs, freedom, education, opportunity, political power.

She must have spoken with authority: the servants follow Jesus’ directive on the strength of her words. If we have ever stereotyped Mary as silent, passive, or resigned to the status quo, the story of Cana corrects our image. Just as she crosses the taboo line into the male section of the party to address Jesus, so she names our needs and encourages our bold initiatives to change injustice.

The Scriptures and the Catechism

Each of us has been gifted by the Holy Spirit in ways that contribute to the building up of our Christian community (*CCC*, #798–801). Too often we consider only what we get from our community, and not enough about what we can give. Because God loves diversity, God creates us and gifts us in unique ways (*CCC*, #1830–32).

God also expects that we use our diverse gifts for building up our community. Like Jesus at Cana, who learns that he also must give a gift to the newly-married couple, we cannot save our “best wine” for later, but bring it now to make our parish community better.

The World of the Bible

Glory

In Hebrew, the word *glory* is related to weight or heaviness, hence it describes someone’s inner worth or importance. When applied to humans, it can be associated with anything that gives a person dignity and commands respect such as honor, wealth or wisdom.

When *glory* is associated with God, the meaning becomes more complex. On the one hand, *glory* describes the essence of God’s divinity that requires us to respect and honor God. But *glory* also points to the visible manifestation of God’s invisible presence, for example in the cloud and pillar of fire leading the Hebrews during the exodus.

Thus in John’s gospel, when Jesus reveals his glory through his first wondrous sign at Cana (John 2:11), he is visibly showing people that he is filled with God’s own invisible power and so commands the forces of nature. But more importantly, he is inviting us who see the sign to recognize his divinity with eyes of faith and respond with our whole-hearted belief.

His glory will later be fully revealed in his passion, death and resurrection (John 12:23-36; 13:31-32). In these events the Father gives glory to Jesus, demonstrating that Jesus is what he claims to be (John 8:54; 17:1-5), and his followers can “see his glory” (John 1:14; 17:20-26) and proclaim it to the world.