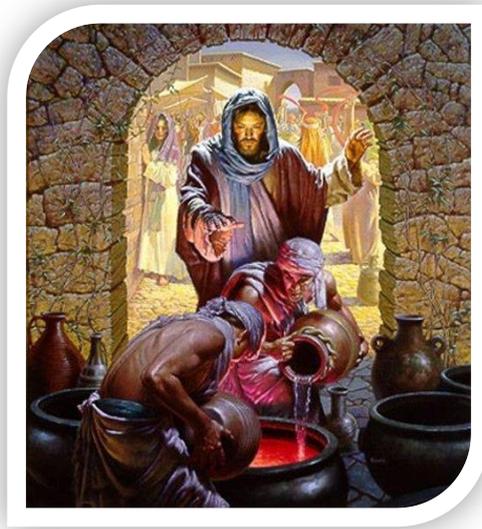


# IMAGINATIVE PRAYER

**An active way of engaging the heart and mind in prayer.**



## The First Miracle: The Wedding Feast of Cana

### What is Imaginative Prayer?

Contemplation or Imaginative prayer is a very active way of praying that engages the mind and heart, stirring up thoughts, desires and emotions. It is also known as *mental prayer*.

### Setting the Scene

The Wedding Reception at Cana in Galilee was the first of the seven signs reported by John in his Gospel. Jesus was around 30 years of age and had not yet started His ministry.

The role of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was pivotal in this event. From what John tells us, this miracle was low key. The only ones who knew about it were Jesus, His Mum, the waiters and the disciples of Jesus who attended the wedding.

This report of the first miracle of Jesus tells us something of Jesus and of Mary, His Mother. Firstly, Jesus was not averse to having a good time - He was at a wedding reception with His mates. Secondly, His Mum had a very real influence over Him and didn't need to nag to stir Him into action. Her approach was one of positive expectancy.

Here then is an opportunity for you to share in this wedding celebration in your imagination, to witness first hand, the first miracle of Jesus, the commencement of His ministry. Silently follow these words of Scripture as you listen to the reading.





## Scripture Reading

*On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited. And they ran out of wine, since the wine provided for the feast had all been used, and the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' Jesus said, 'Woman, what do you want from me? My hour has not come yet.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' There were six stone water jars standing there, meant for the ablutions that are customary among the Jews: each could hold twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water,' and they filled them to the brim. Then he said to them, 'Draw some out now and take it to the president of the feast.' They did this; the president tasted the water, and it had turned into wine. Having no idea where it came from -- though the servants who had drawn the water knew -- the president of the feast called the bridegroom and said, 'Everyone serves good wine first and the worse wine when the guests are well wined; but you have kept the best wine till now.' This was the first of Jesus' signs: it was at Cana in Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him. [John 2:1-11]*

## Centering

Move into a comfortable, relaxed position, letting go of all tension in the body. Close your eyes and gently become present to yourself. ✚ Breathe naturally. Sense the movement of air in and out. ✚ Feel the cool air as it passes through your nostrils and the warm air as you breathe out. ✚ Breathe in deeply and out very gently 'as if a feather is under your nose and you don't want to disturb it'. ✚ On the outward breath, let go of any remaining tension, and on the inward breath, ask the Holy Spirit to renew you. ✚

## Meditation

Move in your imagination to a large hall with its rows of tables, all finely laid out for a wedding feast. ✚ Lots of happy people, relatives and friends of the bride and groom, are seated at the tables. ✚ You notice an empty chair at a table and as you move closer to it, you see the name tent on the table in front of the chair. ✚ You peer at the name tent ... your name is on it! This is your seat. ✚ As you sit down, you look around at the guests seated near you. ✚ Who is at the table? Who is that man seated beside you? He seems to have the attention of everyone at the table. They have eyes only for him; they hang on every word he says. He is telling a story ... an amusing story that brings a smile to your face. You notice from the hands with which he is gesturing, that he is used to hard work. These are the hands of someone who works with his hands – and he has strong looking shoulders ... He is obviously used to carrying heavy objects on those shoulders. Someone who works with wood, you guess, perhaps a carpenter?

You notice a striking woman at the bridal table. She is looking over at your table, at the man seated beside you. Just as he finishes his story, there is a burst of laughter from the guests at your table. You notice the woman shake her head and smile. What is she thinking? ✚

It is such a wonderful wedding feast! The music, dancing, food and wine. And now, the man seated beside you turns his attention to you and introduces himself as Jesus. As you gaze into his eyes, they seem to draw you in. He smiles at you ... you feel so at home with him, as if you have known him all your life. His face is so serene ... a man truly at peace ... He speaks to you ... and you feel as if you and he are the only ones in the room. ✚ What he is saying to you. Listen! ✚

Out of the corner of your eye you notice someone approaching. It's that striking woman you saw earlier at the bridal table. She places her hand tenderly on the shoulder of Jesus. He



responds immediately by standing and wrapping his arms around her and putting His cheek to hers. "Mother," he says warmly, "Are you enjoying yourself?" She nods at him ... She looks up at him and you hear her say: "Jesus ... they have run out of wine." †

You see Jesus look past her and at the families of the bride and groom... † you see what he sees... from their discomfort it is true... and you know they face real humiliation. † You hear his response, "Mother..." he pauses and with an imperceptible shake of his head. "I'm not .... It's not..." He stops and looks into the dark eyes that match His own. "Not yet," he hesitates. † She simply smiles at him with a look of deep peace and without another word walks away towards the serving area and you notice that she speaks softly to the servants. What is she saying? They look bewildered but are nodding their heads. †

You look at Jesus... He seems to be lost in deep thought... as if in prayer. Is He praying? † A look of deep serenity comes across his face... He walks over to the servants, gesturing for you and a few others of his companions from the table to follow Him. He speaks to the servants... they begin to fill 6 large stone jars with water. They are confused – but they do as he asks. "Now, draw out a glass" he says gently, "and take it to the headwaiter." †

You watch as two of the servants carry a brimming glass to the headwaiter. He takes a sip, and you watch him smile broadly and hear him say, "Where did you get this?" The two servants look at each other open-mouthed but the steward doesn't wait for an answer, instead he walks over to speak with the groom. †

You watch the bridegroom's puzzled face ... and now the steward returns and orders the servants to serve the wine. † What wine? You saw only water in the jars. You ask for a glass of the liquid... you raise it to your nose and smell the aroma... you turn the glass in your hands... you raise the glass to your lips... and you taste..... †

In amazement you turn to face Jesus ... you look into His eyes again ... and He smiles... † There is amazement also on the faces of Jesus' companions. You look to the bridal table and see again the face of Mary ... What is it you see in her face? † As you move to rejoin your table, you glance over at the servants. They are whispering to other servants and pointing to Jesus. What are they saying? †

Jesus looks at you again... with those eyes that seem to see so deep within you ... He smiles that smile... Then he offers you an invitation... just two words... ... you feel goose bumps all over ... and you know that your life will never be the same again. What is that two word invitation? What do you say to him? † Talk with Jesus about it now † Stay in this moment. †

## **Personal Sharing**

Now is a good opportunity to share what happened for you.

As you share be aware that Jesus & Mary are listening intently, without judgement, and with eyes full of love for you.

## **Closing Prayer**

Let us pray together:

O God, you called Mary to be the mother of Jesus and the mother of us all.

Let the example of her faithfulness inspire us to open ourselves to the fullness of your grace that we, too, may bear Christ to the world. Grant this in the name of the same Jesus Christ who lives with you and the Holy Spirit forever. Amen.