

January 16, Epiphany 2C (John 2:1-11)

The wedding at Cana is a reminder that Jesus' kingdom is a miraculous kingdom—a mystical kingdom.

by [Ismael Ruiz-Millán](#) in the [December 29, 2021](#) issue

The wedding at Cana is the third epiphany of Jesus accounted for in the lectionary readings. It is also, according to John, the first public miracle Jesus performs after his baptism. Several things are happening in this story. It all starts when Jesus' mother lets him know that there is a shortage of wine. Jesus' immediate response is that it is none of their business. "Do whatever he tells you" is Mary's response—no matter what, just trust and obey.

Jesus knows that for his disciples to trust and obey him, he needs to quench their skepticism with signs—miraculous and unexpected signs. Jesus uses what is handy, but he also wants to make a statement. The jars utilized for purification rites become the instrument for the miracle Jesus is about to perform. "Fill the jars with water" is Jesus' instruction to the disciples, and as Mary asked them to do, they trust and obey him.

The disciples' trust and obedience bear fruit right away, and they become the first witnesses of Jesus' power. Even more, they become the first witnesses of the kind of kingdom Jesus wants to establish. Jesus' kingdom challenges our rites, practices, and old habits and offers new wine—a new and better way. The disciples also become the first witnesses of Jesus' glory, and they respond by believing.

Jesus' glory, in simple terms, is God's presence. The wedding becomes the place where Jesus reveals himself as the powerful Son of God, the place where the disciples believe in that power. After this, Jesus keeps revealing his glory and power through different encounters and healings, until his crucifixion. Jesus still wants his church to trust, obey, and believe.

The wedding at Cana is a reminder that Jesus' kingdom is a miraculous kingdom—a mystical kingdom. Sadly, we do not often explore the mystical, supernatural side of our faith—or the mystical and supernatural power of Jesus. The supernatural can happen through ordinary instruments, like jars used in purification rites.

My first trip after the pandemic started was to El Paso, Texas, to be at the Walk for the Children, which calls attention to detained migrant children. Once I was fully vaccinated, I wanted my first trip to be a trip with a cause. Additionally, as a *fronterizo* (someone born at the border), I had already adopted the practice of pilgrimage to the border as a way of spiritual renewal and remembering my roots.

As on every other such trip, as soon as I felt the fresh air from the borderlands, I felt an unexplainable peace and a strong sense of belonging. After the walk, I had the opportunity to connect with Abara, an organization which makes connections across the border. I was blessed to share time with Abara director Sami DiPasquale. He shared his vision and passion for the borderlands.

He also shared his passion for the mystical spirituality of the Desert Fathers. As he talked, we walked through the site where a new Abara ministry will be located, and at some point we were under a bridge, which he envisions will be a place for reflection: from there you can see both the border fence and Abara's future site, a potential place of hope and opportunity. As DiPasquale spoke about the intersection he sees between the Desert Fathers' spirituality and the borderlands, both of us felt the wind surrounding us. It was truly mystical, and I am convinced it was the gentle and powerful touch of the Holy Spirit.

After that, we had another encounter at the Madero camp, where Pancho Villa once strategized and led a revolutionary movement. As we approached the site another car was leaving, and the driver, Cindy Medina, stopped us and asked if we were doing a tour. DiPasquale explained that he was showing me around. Unexpectedly, Medina—who works for the Pancho Villa Foundation—offered to explain to us the significance of the place. More significant for me, and more mystical, was that she also shared how that morning she felt a prompting from God to go to the place and offer a prayer. That is how we ended up meeting there.

As she showed us around, I felt I was on sacred ground, and I felt a strong sense of connection to that place and its people. Again, it is hard to explain, as it is hard to explain how Jesus converted water into wine. But that is the point in exploring the

mystical aspects of our faith: unexplainable ways we experience the work of the Spirit in our lives, Cana moments today.

The wedding at Cana is an example of Jesus' mysticism. Perhaps it is a reminder and an invitation that we should not be afraid to be mystics. We should not be afraid to trust and obey our Savior—even if his requests lead us to unknown places, to learn lessons from complete strangers, to be challenged to keep growing in our spirituality, and to be witnesses of Jesus' miraculous works.