

Cindy Bassett

# The Bible Corner



## A wedding

"Come on, Nathanael," Philip called. "Hurry or we'll be late!"

"I've already told you, Philip, I'm not going," a voice from inside the house said firmly. "So go away and leave me alone."

"I think that you are just jealous of Benjamin," Philip replied, chuckling. "After all, every one in Cana knew that you wanted to marry Deborah."

This last statement brought just the response that Philip had hoped for. In the next instant, Nathanael flung open the door and stalked out.

"It just so happens, Philip," Nathanael retorted, "that I have more important things to do than go to a wedding. Now please, extend my regrets."

"Not until you tell me what you are so upset about," Philip insisted. "You can't hide your feelings from me, because I know you too well. We grew up together, and I certainly can tell when something is bothering you. Now stop pouting like a child, Nathanael. Talk to me!"

Philip sat down next to his friend and smiled. Sometimes he found Nathanael too serious and rigid, but they had been friends for many years. Both of their families still lived in Cana.

"Well," Philip repeated his request, "are you going to tell me?"

"I was certain that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah," he began, his face saddened. "Three days ago, you told me He was the one that the prophets had spoken of for centuries."

"I still feel that way," Philip replied. "How can you doubt so soon? One only has to be in His presence for a few minutes."

"Don't you see?" Nathanael interrupted. "We should be out leading the people in a revolution against the Roman oppressors! If this Jesus is really the Messiah, then why are we wasting time going to a wedding?"

"These are your ideas of what the Messiah is supposed to do," Philip chided his friend. "You said that you wanted to follow Jesus, but it seems as though you are trying to lead the way."

Nathanael was silent during the short journey to the small village of Cana. When they arrived, a large group of well-wishers had already gathered at the home of Samuel. Jesus sat at table with Andrew, Peter and John. As soon as Jesus saw Philip and Nathanael, He beckoned for them to join the others.

"Why so serious, Nathanael?" Jesus asked, with the look of one who already knew.

"He's still brooding over missing out on being the bridegroom," everyone laughed good-naturedly, and everyone laughed.

The celebration went on well into the night. Everyone present had a wonderful time eating and drinking. At the huge feast that had been prepared, no one except Nathanael even noticed when Mary, Jesus's mother, called Him aside. Mary was close friends with the bride's family, so she had come today to help with the preparations.

"Son," she said softly, "so many have turned out for the wedding. The wine has

run out. It would be a great embarrassment to Deborah and Benjamin on their special day. Can you do something to help them?"

Nathanael, who listened for Jesus' answer, didn't understand it when it came. "Woman," Jesus replied calmly, "what can I do? Don't you realize that my hour has not yet come?"

Then Mary returned to the preparation room. A few minutes later, Jesus left the table and joined her. Nathanael followed.

None of the servants in the preparation room noticed Nathanael standing off in the corner. They were too concerned about the wine. Perhaps the head waiter would be reprimanded for not ordering up enough. Maybe they, too, would forfeit part of their wages today for this mistake.

"Do whatever my Son tells you," Mary instructed. Then, as if she was certain the problem had been resolved, Mary went back to the other preparations.

"Fill those water pots up to the brim with water," Jesus said, pointing to the empty stone pots in the corner of the room.

For a brief moment, a questioning look was exchanged between two of the servants, who nevertheless rushed to obey.

The six water pots had been set aside for the Jewish custom of purification. Each pot would hold about 25 gallons of water. While the servants busied themselves with the task of filling the jugs, Nathanael watched Jesus. Even in this back room, there was an unmistakable reverence about Him as He bowed His head in silent prayer.

The water pots had been filled and lined up neatly before Jesus. "Draw out some," He said simply, "and bring it to the head waiter to taste."

The servants didn't understand, but again they obeyed without questioning, even after they had poured out some of the liquid from one of the water pots and noticed it was now the color of a fine red wine.

A few moments later, the bridegroom stood in the preparation room with the head waiter, who had politely called Benjamin aside so as not to embarrass him in front of his guests.

"Sir, with all due respect, I am sure that you have much on your mind today," said the head waiter. "But it is customary at celebrations to serve the best wine to the guests first. Then, later, when they have eaten and drunk freely, the wine that is of poorer quality is brought forth. This wine is of a superior vintage. Why have you kept it until now?"

The bridegroom tasted it and was puzzled. "You are right; this is excellent stuff!" he replied. "But don't worry — we shall have another toast," he decided, smiling.

The head waiter departed with the bridegroom to make the announcement. The servants rushed to bring out the wine. Only Nathanael remained in the preparation room with Jesus, the Messiah.

Nathanael lowered his head now in shame. And Jesus came and stood before him and said gently, "Come, Nathanael, will you follow me now and join the others? He who chooses to abide in Me will bear much fruit in time."

**For discussion:**

- 1) What did Nathanael think the Messiah should do?
- 2) How did Jesus, as the Messiah, accomplish His Father's will?
- 3) An "abiding" faith in Jesus means that we are willing to trust Him without setting limits on how long we will follow Him. Do I have that kind of faith?

**For further reading:**

- 1) The story of the wedding feast at Cana is found in John, Chapter 2:1-11.
- 2) Jesus tells us how to live "fruitful" lives in John, Chapter 15.

### Rites of Election set for RCIA participants

Bishop Matthew H. Clark plans to celebrate four Rites of Election next month with candidates and catechumens who are participating in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

During each rite, the bishop will elect catechumens, who have not been previously baptized, and will affirm candidates who have been baptized in another Christian tradition and are seeking full communion in

the Roman Catholic Church.

Rites of Election are scheduled for the following locations and dates: St. Patrick's, Corning, March 8, 4 p.m.; St. Francis DeSales, Geneva, March 11, 7:30 p.m.; Sacred Heart Cathedral, March 13, 7:30 p.m., and March 14, noon.

Bishop Clark has also invited adult confirmation candidates to an afternoon of prayer and reflection on Saturday, March 28,

at 2 p.m. in Sacred Heart Cathedral.

All parishes using the RCIA process are encouraged to send participants to one of the celebrations. Bishop Clark has asked that parishes plan a ceremony of affirmation at Sunday Mass before the Rite of Election.

Sponsors, family members and friends of the candidates and catechumens, as well as parishioners who have participated in their formation, are also invited to attend the Rites of Election. Receptions will follow each celebration.

### Cancer society seeks volunteers for annual Daffodil Festival

This year the American Cancer Society will be celebrating its 17th annual Daffodil Festival from March 30 through April 5. During the week, daffodils will be on sale and distributed throughout Monroe County with all proceeds going for cancer research.

Volunteers are needed to help with the delivery and sales of these symbols of hope. If you are interested in helping, please call (716)288-1950.

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