Water into wine

**Centrepiece:** Cross surrounded by cups / jug of water / wine/ juice

**Introduction:**

This evening you have set aside an hour to rest and be with Jesus. I’ve been praying that this time will be one where you experience afresh God’s deep interest in you, his compassion for you, and his unfailing love and hope for you.

We’re going to spend some time tonight entering into and joining with Jesus at the feast at Cana, where Jesus performed his first miracle, turning water into wine. First we’re going to watch this scene from the movie, The Gospel of John, and then I’m going to lead you through an imaginative prayer where you will imagine that you are at that wedding.

After that we will have half an hour of quiet in which we can either continue to reflect on the imaginative prayer exercise and the suggested, or there are three other suggestions for prayer which you might like to try. These are all explained in your handout. I would advise to stay with the cup and water exercise as long as it’s meaningful before moving on.

Before we begin, let’s spend a minute in silence, preparing our hearts to receive from God, safe in the knowledge that he always wants the best for us. I will then play the clip, read the imaginative exercise, and then we will have half an hour of silent reflection.

**Cana wedding clip:** *The Gospel of John* 12:40-15:39 (duration 2:59) (can be found on youtube)

**Imaginative prayer exercise:**

Imaginative prayer is the name given to prayer which helps us enter more fully into the passage of Scripture we are reading, by using our ability to form pictures or inner impressions in our minds. We live in a rational, left brain world where information and analysis is prized above everything else. Yet as human beings, our soul is still fired by colour and imagination. Jesus called on people’s imagination all the time. He was constantly telling stories and painting word pictures. He asked people to imagine the kingdom of God as a mustard seed, as yeast, as treasure hidden in a field...

Imaginative prayer ‘puts us in the picture’ with the Gospel characters and helps us see the Gospel stories played out in our own homes and neighbourhoods. Praying this way can create a deeper and more personal intimacy with Jesus.

It’s important that as you hear the story you try to feel what it’s like to actually be inside that story. Listen, taste, smell, feel, and watch what happens. What can you see around you? What are Jesus’ facial expressions? What are you feeling?

I invite you to put aside anything which you are carrying – just put it to on the ground or beside you so you hands are free. You may like to close your eyes so you are not distracted; take a few easy breaths and begin to relax.
Let us begin with a prayer: Loving God who created us with imaginations, we offer this time to you and pray that the Holy Spirit will be present to guide and protect us and help us to draw closer to You. AMEN

We’re going to start by remembering a time when we felt close to Jesus, when we felt safe in his care. Ask Jesus to remind you of a time, and then stay with that awareness of Jesus close to you. I’ll give you a couple of minutes to find that place. PAUSE FOR ONE MINUTE

Now imagine that you are at that wedding party in Cana. Take a moment to look around you. What do you notice? What are the smells, the sounds...what can you see?...Are you sitting or standing? Where abouts?...Now as you look around you, you can see that people are starting to stir...there is murmuring...what’s happening? You soon notice that the wine has run out and people are starting to think that they party is over and it's time to go home...What is the reaction on people's faces as they realise that it's over...What is your reaction?...

Now look over to where you can see Mary approaching Jesus...she's talking with him...suggesting something...he seems to dismiss her suggestion, but then you notice him walk with one of the servants to the rear courtyard. Curious, you follow....What can you see?...It looks like he's asking the servants to do something, and soon you see them leave and return with jugs of water...their filling up the pots used for ritual cleansing...but why?...people are about to leave, why fill them up now?...as one of the pots is filled, Jesus tells a servant to dip a ladle into it and the servant then puts it to his lips...a look of complete astonishment appears on his face...another servant does the same, and soon all of them are standing around, amazed...look at their faces, their expressions...what does it tell you...suddenly you notice that Jesus has been watching you, and as you catch his eye he beckons you over...you hesitate, but then drawn in by his warmth you walk over too..."Try it" he says, and taking a ladle from a servant you dip it into the water and draw it up...as you do, a wonderful aroma of wine reaches your nose...your heart beats as you start to realise what may have just happened...you lift the ladle up to your lips and taste the most wonderful wine of your life...Jesus looks at you and smiles..."As I have done here, so I can do for you" he says...You must have looked puzzled because again he says, "As I have done here, so I can do for you...I know you," he continues... "I know those situations, people and places where it feels like the party is over, the wine has run out, joy has left, and all that's left is to pack up and go home...but if I can take ordinary water and turn it into wine, can I not take your needs and transform them with my power...can I not enter into the situations of your life which feel hopeless and renew them...can I not refresh you even though you feel dry...give me what little water you have and let me transform it into what you need...trust me..."

We will now enter into a time of silent reflection. You are invited to take a cup from the table, and to take it away and reflect on a situation, person or place in your life that needs refreshment, renewal or transformation. When you are ready, fill your cup with water as a symbolic gesture of your desire for God to enter into that situation and change that water into his rich wine. There are several suggestions for how to spend your time if you want other options. At the end of the time of silence please place your cup back on the table with the water in it.

Closing:

Ask people to place the cups on the table in the centre. If there are post-it prayers on the cross, read these out slowly. After this say,
“On the table in front of us are cups containing the water of our lives. During this time, we have had a chance to talk with God about situations, people, & places in our lives which feel like water. These situations may feel to us like the party has ended. There is no wine left to let the party continue. Just like on the clip we watched, we are left looking into an empty wine glass wondering where it all went. I hope that you have been able to talk with God honestly and openly about how you feel about this. Or perhaps you have been rejoicing over a situation where God has already performed the miracle of turning water into wine in your life. Like Mary, we know Jesus' power, his ability to transform and renew. And so we now, collectively, ask Jesus for this miracle in our life. We ask that for each of us, that these situations, these people, these places, be renewed with the wine that is Jesus.”

Pick up the bottle of wine (or if need be, juice), and pour a little into each cup. As you do, pray out loud for each one, “May the miracle of Jesus fill this cup”. After saying this a few times you might like to encourage everyone to say this with you as you pour a little wine/ juice into the cup.

**Close with this prayer (on handout)**

*We give thanks to Jesus, whose first miracle was turning water into wine, renewing the joy of the guests and allowing the party to continue.*

*We give thanks to Jesus, who enters into every place in our life*

- the joyful
- the painful
- the trivial

*and meets our need to be renewed, refreshed and sustained.*

*May we always depend on God for all of our needs.*

*Amen.*