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The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order

The Third Sunday of Zemene Asterio (The Season of Manifestation (Theophany)

Liturgical Readings:

Hebrew. 2: 1—11; 1 John 5: 1 - 13; Acts 10: 34 -39

Ps. 84: 6—7

John 2: 1—14

The Anaphora of Dioscorous

The Intercession of the Virgin Mary at Cana of Galilee

Beloved in Christ, as we contemplate the mystery of salvation revealed in the Gospel according to St Matthew 2:1–13—the homage of the Magi, the humility of the Incarnate Word, and the quiet yet decisive role of the Virgin Mother—we are led naturally to Cana of Galilee, where the same Child, now made manifest as the Son of Man, reveals His glory through the intercession of His Mother. From Bethlehem to Cana, from the manger to the wedding feast, the economy of salvation unfolds in harmony, obedience, and divine timing.

The Magi, guided by the star, pass through hardship and danger, yet press on until they behold the Child with Mary His Mother. Their journey echoes the words of the Psalmist: “Passing through the valley of weeping, they make it a place of springs; they go from strength to strength” (Psalm 84:6–7). In the Ethiopian Orthodox understanding, the presence of Mary is never incidental. Where Christ is revealed, His Mother stands as the living Ark, bearing not stone tablets but the Word made flesh, fulfilling the promise spoken in Eden: “I will put enmity between you and the woman” (Genesis 3:15). She is the New Eve, whose obedience unties the knot of the first woman’s disobedience.

At Cana of Galilee, as recorded in John 2:1–14, the Mother of God perceives the need before it becomes a crisis: “They have no wine.” Her words are neither command nor demand, but compassionate intercession. Here, the One born of her according to the flesh, “made like His brothers and sisters in every respect” (Hebrews 2:1–11), begins the signs that reveal His glory. Though He says, “My hour has not yet come,” we understand, in light of the whole Gospel, that this hour moves mysteriously through obedience to the Father’s will. Time itself bends before divine love. Later He will say, “My time has not yet come” (John 7:6), and again, “No one laid hands on Him, because His hour had not yet come” (John 7:30; 8:20). Yet at Cana, through the intercession of His Mother, the hour dawns in seed form, pointing toward the Cross and Resurrection.

This moment at Cana is not isolated; it is woven into the fabric of salvation history. From the beginning, humanity was created male and female, blessed and called to fruitfulness (Genesis 1:27–28). Marriage itself, celebrated at Cana, is revealed as a sacred covenant, later illuminated by St Paul: “Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25–end). The transformation of water into wine speaks of creation renewed, echoing Psalm 104, where God’s Spirit renews the face of the earth. It also recalls the prophetic tenderness of Hosea, where God speaks to His unfaithful people not with wrath but with restoring love: “I will allure her... and speak tenderly to her” (Hosea 2:4–18).

The Virgin Mary stands at the heart of this renewal. In Galatians 4:4 we are told, “When the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman.” Her intercession at Cana reveals her maternal role in the life of the Church. She does not draw attention to herself but directs all to Christ: “Do whatever He tells you.” This obedience mirrors her own fiat and becomes the pattern of Christian discipleship, a call echoed in Hebrews 13:7, urging us to remember and imitate the faith of those who have gone before us.

As the Gospel unfolds, Christ’s hour advances inexorably. “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (John 12:23–27). At the Last Supper, knowing that His hour had come to depart from this world to the Father, He loves His own to the end (John 13:1). He speaks of glory through humility, authority through service (John 13:16, 32). In His great priestly prayer He lifts His eyes to heaven and says, “Father, the hour has come” (John 17:1–2). The obedience first foreshadowed at Cana reaches its fulfilment in Gethsemane: “Not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42; Matthew 26:18).

From an Ethiopian Orthodox theological perspective, the intercession of the Virgin Mary is inseparable from Christ’s redemptive work. She is honoured not as an alternative mediator, but as the foremost intercessor who leads the faithful to her Son. Her role is illuminated by the apostolic witness: God “shows no partiality” (Acts 10:34–39), yet He honours humility, faith, and obedience. Those who believe that Jesus is the Christ are born of God, and this life is given in the Son (1 John 5:1–13).

Beloved, the journey of the Magi, the wedding at Cana, and the Cross itself all proclaim one truth: God enters human history with gentleness, inviting cooperation rather than coercion. The Virgin Mary, standing at the threshold of each mystery, teaches the Church how to respond—with trust, attentiveness, and prayerful intercession. As we walk from strength to strength, may we, like her, perceive the needs of the world, bring them to Christ, and hear again the life-giving commandment given on Sinai and fulfilled in love (Exodus 20). And may the same Lord who transformed water into wine transform our lives, until we behold His glory face to face.

Glory to God, Amen!