Today we have the most Episcopalian and least Baptist of all the miracles -- turning water into wine. And as interesting as it would be to speculate on what kind of wine Jesus produced, I will simply say that I am pretty sure that whatever it was it would not come in a box nor be found at Quick Trip. But onto the point I would like to make today and that point comes from our passage in 1st Corinthians. If you have forgotten what it was all about let me just give you a few snippets. Paul says, “there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit… To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.” The gist of the passage is that the church is comprised of many types of people who all bring unique gifts and it is the collection of those unique gifts which makes a healthy and thriving church. Fair enough but the reason I want to look at this passage is because I think it describes us here at St. John Chrysostom. As I once told someone in explaining us, we may not be a huge church but we seem to have one of everything. When I made this statement, I meant it in terms of professional backgrounds – we have a lawyer, an insurance guy, a nurse, a computer guy, an archivist and lots of engineers for some reason, but I think it applies just as well to how we come together as a church. That is the various and sundry roles we have at St. John Chrysostom. And as St Paul tells us that is how it should be at a healthy church. In a healthy church everyone has a role to play in building up the community.

Sometimes when we think of the church, we can forget the participatory nature of the place and instead think of it in more monarchial terms. In such a scenario I would be the king and you my loyal subjects. If I am a good king then the church thrives, if I am a bad king then it does not. If you ever look at adds for clergy positions there is often a monarchial element in them. They will say they want a priest who will grow the church. I assume that they mean this in sort of the same way that Kim Jong Il was able to control the weather with his moods believing a monarchial priest is able to summon church members out of thin air. But here is the thing, I can’t do that much. People might come because I invite them or because they like me or find my sermons mildly amusing, but that won’t make them stay. They will stay because they like and feel comfortable with you; that is they like the community. And communities are strongest when they need every member. I believe it was Myra Huth at last year’s annual meeting who said of us that we are small but mighty. I believe that to be true but it only happens because everyone participates in the life of the church, everyone has something that they do.

Before the naval battle at Trafalgar, Admiral Horatio Nelson sent out a message from his flagship the HMS Victory. The message was simple, reading, “England expects that every man will do his duty." And they did. At the end of the day, despite being outnumbered by the combined French and Spanish fleet, the English Navy captured twenty-one ships and sunk another while not losing any ships to either capture or sinking. It worked because everyone did their duty. Everyone contributed what they could to the cause, whether it was the helmsman or the guy who loaded the canons.

And as Paul points out, the church is comprised of people who have different talents; we are not all good at the same thing. But much of the trick is not only to understand and cultivate those talents but to also esteem the talents of everyone. Because as humans we can often forget the less glamorous among us and only focus on the shiny and exciting things. If you don’t believe me, here are two quick questions to answer from the world of sports (and this is not today’s trivia): Name five NFL quarterbacks past or present. Now here is the second part of that question name five right tackles past or present. Unless you eat and breath football, I am guessing that you are struggling with the second question because right tackles are not glamorous. They are big guys who try and block other big guys. But think of football without them. How glamorous would the quarterback look if you had a terrible right tackle and the defense came straight through the line on every play making the quarterback constantly run for his life. You can be a very talented quarterback but if you are constantly being chased by 300-pound defensive end you might not be so glorious.

And so let me just take a moment and say thank you to all of the people here at St. John Chrysostom -- the glamourous and the unglamorous. Thank you to those who do the work that may or may not even be noticed but is necessary work all the same. And for fun let me go through some of the objects of my thankfulness. I am thankful for those who volunteer to clean the parish hall and the church. For as you might have guessed this place does not simply clean itself. And think what it would be like if you showed up for church and the garbage was overflowing and the carpet was covered in dirt. My guess is that you might have a less than satisfactory worship experience. Just a quick deviation. At my last parish the parishioners collected cans for recycling. The problem was that while they were reasonably good at the collection part, they were not so good at the take the cans to the recycling center part. What this meant in reality was that there were two large garbage cans at the front of the parish hall full of soda cans. And as you might guess sticky soda cans in the hot Texas sun attract a lot of flies. And so every trip into the parish hall was, to put it gently, not fun unless you like flies in your ears. Does taking cans to the recycling center sound like a glamorous position? No, but without it your parish has the feel of a garbage landfill in Trenton, New Jersey. So, thank you for not leaving soda cans around but back to my list of thanks. I am thankful for those who decorated for Christmas and for the enormous Christmas tree. This is purely a subjective opinion but I think our parish was the most beautiful in Christendom. I am thankful for those who come on the parish clean up days. For those who take time out of their schedule to do things like plug the holes in our basement so it is not a hotel for wildlife. I am thankful for everyone who brings something to share at our church potlucks. And just as another side note other parish potlucks can be scary affairs whereas ours are a delight to the palate. I am thankful for how you treat one another. I am thankful that the parish is not a beehive of gossip. I am thankful for men’s night, the English Breakfast, Lessons and Carols, Altar Guild, Evensong, the knotters and having a balanced budget. And here is the thing I know that I am leaving out lots of things. This is partly because I am over fifty and the memory is getting a little fuzzy but it is also partly because in so much of what you do you do not seek recognition. Yes, we all have different talents and all of those talents are needed for this place to thrive. And so, thanks to all of you. Thanks for your contributions to God’s kingdom so that we may be his, this day and forevermore.