

Wedding Feast at Cana

This night gathering in a downtown Australian city, looks, at first glance, like a Last Supper with a red-haired Jesus haloed by a street lamp, breaking bread and blessing the wine. Then again, those at the table are dressed in contemporary clothes rather than first century robes of the disciples and they seem preoccupied with eating and drinking. What is going on?

For the accomplished yet mischievous Russian-born, Australian artist Louis Kahan, his *Wedding Feast at Cana*, overlaps several Gospel themes and parables. While focusing on the wedding couple who have eyes only for each other, Kahan places Jesus between them mediating their new relationship as he offers his own body and blood in blessing for the newly-weds.

Meanwhile, the invited guests are a motley assortment of the city's misfits and marginalized -- invited to the communion table from the highways and byways -- a parable of salvation-- raising the question for this artist, just who will get to heaven?

For Kahan, the painting also carries a symbolic meanings on the stages of belief and unbelief: a woman feeds a dog (left), while children go hungry (right); a well fed businessman is watched over by the mythical maiden of fecundity; and others seem self-absorbed in drinking.

Stylistically, the colors and forms parallel German painters who were also concerned with myths and hidden social messages. Kahan was known to his friends as the epitome of a gentle-man, exceedingly generous, articulate, caring and very impish.

