

Epiphany (B)

Today is the Feast of the Epiphany, traditionally celebrated twelve days after the birth of Jesus on January 6th. So the movies get it wrong here, as they typically have the Magi, or the 3 Wise Men, visiting Jesus right after His birth.

The word “epiphany” means “manifestation or revealing.” What is revealed or made manifest here is Jesus’ divinity, that is we remember Jesus making His divinity known to the world in a public way. There are actually three events in Jesus’ life that we are celebrating today. The first is the Adoration of the Magi, which is what we typically think of today. The other two are Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan, and the Wedding Feast at Cana. Let’s look at each of these three events and see what they might teach us, beginning with the Magi.

We don’t know much about the Magi from the Gospel. Tradition says they were three men from a distant land, who seemed very smart, and were most likely wealthy. They see the star in the sky, and instantly head for Israel because they have interpreted it to mean that the king of the Israelites has been born. When they finally reach the stable, they adore the infant Jesus, and give Him kingly gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Jesus’ divinity is revealed here in the sign that they witnessed, that a virgin would be with child. They would later join the Church, as Christianity spread after Pentecost, and are venerated as saints in the Church as well, with their relics being kept at the cathedral in Cologne, Germany.

They represent us, who are the Pilgrim Church here on earth. They travelled a distance, ultimately reaching Christ. What is our time on earth for? What is the most important thing for us to be focused on? The answer is Jesus Christ and getting to Heaven. In the final analysis, we are journeying through this life to hopefully reach Heaven, as it is not guaranteed for anyone of us. The Magi journeyed too. I'm sure it wasn't easy for them, but they persevered. May they encourage us to persevere in this life, focusing only on Jesus Christ and doing what we can to reach our heavenly destination.

Next we have Jesus' baptism. His divinity is revealed here because the Trinity as a whole can be seen here. As we'll hear next week, the voice of the Father is heard, who said, "You are my beloved son." Of course we have the 2nd Person of the Trinity present in the person of Jesus. And the 3rd Person, the Holy Spirit, we are told, descended upon Jesus like a dove. So not only is Jesus' divinity made known, but all three persons of the Trinity as well.

Among other things we see here the importance of obedience and humility in the spiritual life. We cannot always do what we want to do in the Christian life. Jesus was completely obedient to the Father during His earthly life. Did He have to be baptized? No, of course not. He submitted to baptism because it was what His Father, and ours, asked of Him. Nowhere in Scripture, or in the teachings of the Church, does it say anything that tells us to do what we want to do.

As an example, as Catholics we are asked to get married in church by a priest. We cannot get married any way we want to as Catholics. A civil union is not a valid marriage for us Catholics. So this means that if we are not in a valid marriage, then we are living in sin. The 6th and 9th Commandments are still binding on us.

If this is you please consider reaching out to me to begin the process for you to finally get married in the Church. There is a lot of misinformation out there regarding this and annulments, which can only be cleared up by speaking to a priest. So please, if this is you, make it your resolution this year to get married in the Church, even if it means getting an annulment, or even having to get another annulment. Or if you know someone try to gently encourage them in a non-threatening way to do this.

And speaking of marriage, this brings us to the 3rd event that we are remembering today, which revealed Jesus' divinity, and that is the Wedding Feast at Cana. To quickly recap this, there was a wedding celebration (which lasted 7 days back then), during which the wine ran out. Mary notices this and gets Jesus to help them, and He turns water into wine. This is the first public miracle of Jesus' life, as recorded by the Gospels.

So what does this teach us? First, we don't party nearly as hard as the Israelites... can you imagine if we celebrated each wedding for 7 days?! Secondly, He is shown here as the true Bridegroom, as it was the bridegroom's job to supply

the wine. He is the Bridegroom of our hearts. The closeness that Jesus desires with us is likened to the level of spouses. Only He can truly capture us and supply what we really desire. We might think we want money, or things, or pleasures, but we all know they don't satisfy us. We are always found wanting more. This shows us that we all have a desire for something infinite, something that cannot be quenched in this life. We all have a desire for Jesus Christ. Only He can bring the satisfaction and happiness that we really want. Only He can fulfill the desires that He, Himself, imprinted on our hearts.

May thank our Lord today for these mysteries that are revealed to us, as we celebrate the Epiphany. May we be renewed in mind and heart in following after Christ. May our love for Him be rekindled, that our lives and desires may be placed in Him who can never disappoint us. And like the Magi, may we persevere as we journey through this life, to one day reach our heavenly homeland, to enjoy it with Jesus, our Bridegroom, for all eternity.