

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Three Epiphanies** The Baptism of the Lord/C Sunday, January 10, 2016 Mass of Anticipation Wednesday, January 6, 2016 8:15 AM Is 42:1-2, 4, 6-7; Acts 10:34-38; **Lk 3:15-16, 21-22** (These three epiphanies are really full of the initial, inaugural announcements of what God is doing.)

Boys and girls, years ago some teachers told me, they said, “You know, it’s really terrible: after Christmas the children don’t remember anything.” That can’t be true here. Did you forget anything you ever learned? May I ask you a few questions?

Last Sunday what did we celebrate? The Epiphany, Epiphany, **last Sunday was the feast of Epiphany.** Well, in a way, so is next Sunday. **What does the word “epiphany” mean?** Does anyone know? It means “**manifestation,**” manifestation.

**So the first manifestation of God in Christ comes when he is born.** He is born, and this itself is astonishing that God would want to take human form and come as a helpless child. But that’s the first manifestation of God’s work in Christ. And that’s what we talked about last week how **God comes even in a vulnerable child,** how God does not disdain our condition. This is very important especially for the poor in the world who feel that they are in a contemptible situation, pathetic situation; they do not think that they have a very dignified life. And the whole idea is **God wants us to have a dignified life, everybody.** So he has come in a vulnerable way, in a very poor way—where was he born, according to the story? In Bethlehem in a stable. Now that may not be exactly one hundred percent true, but the idea is **he was born in poor circumstances.** He was born poor. His parents were among the *anawim*, in other words, not the elite. They were not the elite at all of Jewish religion. They were on the poor side. They are of the tribe of Judah, but they were not really the ruling class. They were in the poor class. So God comes. **He does not despise human life; he does not despise poverty; he does not even despise being vulnerable. The first manifestation.**

Today in these readings we have the second epiphany. The second epiphany is what? God manifesting in the—yes, in the baptism, but is he still an infant? No, now he is a young man. **He is a young man, and you know what young men need**—what does a young man need? “A wife,” well some may, yes. But more probably a young man needs something to do. **A young man needs a mission. A young man needs a vocation.** It may be having a wife, but it may not be. But he needs something to do. You know what the world has so many problems with? Young men who have nothing to do. Where do you think terrorism comes from? Young men who have nothing to do, nowhere to go—that’s the problem. Well, Jesus was a young man too, but **God gave him something to do. God will give every young man and young woman something to do, but they have to be open.**

Well, **Jesus was open.** So how did he show his openness? He came for baptism. John was a prophet, so Jesus came to talk, but to listen more; and he wanted to receive what God had for him. And what **God had for him was a mission. And it starts with being anointed by the Holy Spirit.**

Now there is a **third epiphany.** It’s actually when Jesus and Mary go to Cana to a wedding, and they run out of wine. This is symbolic. **Cana represents the wedding of God**

**and humanity, heaven and earth.** But there is something terribly wrong; there's something deficient. Our lives aren't quite working the way they are supposed to. Mary, his mother, says to him, "Son, do something." And he says to her, "My time has not yet come." Now **when his time does come, what does he do? He dies on the Cross. But he is not ready yet, but he is ready to manifest his intention. And how will he represent the blood that Jesus poured forth on the Cross?** How do we symbolize that; how do we sacramentalize that in our Church? **In the Eucharist, in the wine of the Eucharist. So he manifests his intention to die for people, to die to show the love of God by transforming water into wine.** That's meant to be a prophecy of his willingness to pour out everything, his whole life, for us, because what is going to fix our relationship, our relationship wounded by selfishness, by everyone wanting to take care of himself and not care about other people. I'll take care of my group, and crush that group. That's the history of the world, unfortunately. The only way that can be overcome is through love, the love that Jesus pours forth on the Cross.

**So these are the three manifestations: God becoming vulnerable, one of us,** like us, to elevate our lives and to elevate our awareness of who we are, to give us a better sense of our dignity, our potential. Secondly, **Jesus as a young man receives a vocation and he receives affirmation:** "You are my beloved." Now we are all baptized too, and that same affirmation belongs to us. We are the beloved of God. **We have to believe in our being beloved,** not only our actual potential but more our actual being loved by God now, not only when we do well, not only later on, not only when we die, but now we are beloved. And we have to recognize this. **This should influence our dynamic feelings about ourselves.** If it doesn't, something is terribly missing.

**And the third manifestation, God will go to the ultimate end of giving all his life in his human body for—**what? To love others, to break down the walls that we set up of selfishness and nationalism, tribalism, racism, and every other ism that divides people. So, you see, this is part of the whole movement, **the movement of God into human life, and it doesn't stop. These three epiphanies are really full of the initial, inaugural announcements of what God is doing,** that God is constantly doing this. God is constantly coming into the vulnerable life we share. God is constantly affirming us, but we have to listen, a lot of times people don't listen, but God is constantly affirming us, and **God is constantly trying to break down all the walls and barriers that divide us from each other.** This is God's work, ongoing work. So **when we gather for the Eucharist, we are being invited into this work. We are being affirmed. We are being joined, but we are also being called forth.**