

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Three Epiphanies January 2 to the Epiphany Saturday, January 7, 2017 8:15 AM
1 Jn 5:14-21; Jn 2:1-11 (St. Raymond of Penyafort, priest) (The Church initiates us
into a relationship, but then we have to promote it. We have to nurture it.)

Now there are three events in the life of Christ that the Fathers of the Church called “epiphanies.” **The word epiphany means manifestation.** Technically there could be any number of epiphanies. We could have epiphanies. If suddenly we realize something profound, we could call that an epiphany.

Now the three events that are called epiphanies are very deeply symbolic: first **the manifestation of the Christ child to the Magi.** Now in this case the Magi are representative of the whole world of the **gentiles**, so in a sense it’s the last epiphany. But in Matthew it’s the first, although Christ came first to his own people, and then in the course of time and through his death and resurrection and the call of St. Paul in particular, the message got out to the gentiles, Matthew puts this first.

The second manifestation, the second epiphany, is **Jesus’ baptism** when those around him experience his anointing. John the Baptist pointed out: “There is the Lamb of God.” The Holy Spirit descended upon him, and that was the second manifestation, in sequence, but actually first.

This is the third, the **miracle of Cana.** John says at the end, “**and his disciples began to believe in him.**” So this is now the beginning, at least in John’s Gospel, the beginning of Jesus’ work with his disciples, **getting them to look at life in a different way.** So they began to believe. It’s not a simple thing. It’s really a long process. **The Church initiates us into a relationship, but then we have to promote it. We have to nurture it.**

Now this **feast of Cana** itself is a rather remarkable and powerful symbol of the coming together of God and humanity; in other words, it’s a symbol of the incarnation itself, the wedding feast, the marriage feast, **the coming together of heaven and earth, divinity and humanity.**

This is what is meant. And the transformation of water into wine, the **wine of course is a symbol of the blood of Christ**, the price he will pay in order to gather together all people into the mercy of God and break down all the walls of enmity and vengeance and the desire for retaliation that plague human history. **Jesus goes to the Cross in order to break those bonds and help people be reconciled to each other and to God**, because it's all one thing. We can't be reconciled to God without being reconciled to each other or vice versa. There is one fabric. There is one God. There is one life. And for us to have that one life, we have to be in God. But **to be in God we have to be forgiving people**. We have to be full of mercy for one another and for ourselves. We have to let go of our demands and our feelings of being wronged and cheated. That's all part of the reconciliation Christ is trying to work in our lives.

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry his time had not yet come. The time is when he goes to the Cross, when he pours out his blood. So here it's all symbolic. **His time has not yet come, but he can present his blood in symbol form, as he does at the Eucharist** so that we can participate in it and experience the healing that divine love brings, the forgiveness divine love brings and the freedom from all claims that perhaps we have made against others, so that we can really dwell in God.