

40 HOMILIES FROM THE HERMITAGE

FOURTH CHRISTMAS QUARTER

THE MANIFESTATION OF JESUS

After Christmas Day and its celebrations, the Liturgy moved seamlessly to Jesus' Mission.

This message is in three parts: 1) The visit of the Magi: 2) the Baptism of Jesus: 3) the first miracle—the changing of water into wine at Cana in Galilee. 'Tria miracula' (Office).

1. The Epiphany. Mercifully once again celebrated on 6th January (twelfth day of Christmas). On this day the Magi from the East come to worship Jesus, the newborn King. This is a celebration of the fact that Jesus has come for ALL, and these strangers from a far land represent all peoples and all humanity. Their gifts are significant: a) Gold—Jesus is King: b) Frankincense—Jesus is priest: c) myrrh—Jesus is a prophet, and indeed a prophet who will die (the myrrh for his burial). When most of Jesus' own people do not recognize Him, except for a few poor shepherds, these men from far away do come to venerate their Lord.
2. The Baptism of Jesus. When Jesus came to be baptized by John in the Jordan it was the external proclamation of His Mission. The event is a 'theophany': as Jesus was baptized His Father's voice from heaven said, 'This is My Son the beloved' and the Holy Spirit was present in the form of a dove (the same Spirit who hovered over the waters at Creation). This form was the traditional Jewish rite of passage. The father would take his son into the market-place and stand him on a platform and proclaim, 'This is my son, the beloved, listen to him' and this was the ritual by which a father would confer his son on the family business: thereafter the son would undertake the business. Just so God the Father proclaims that Jesus is commissioned to carry out His work of Salvation. Jesus is affirmed by both Father and Spirit as the Saviour who is to proclaim the Kingdom of God.
3. The water turned into wine at Cana in Galilee. This was Jesus' first public miracle, not a healing but the care for a wedding couple who were in some discomfiture since the wine had run out. The care was at the behest of Mary, Jesus' mother, and so Jesus' power and love were made manifest for the first time. This is the third manifestation of Jesus' ministry and power. Worth noting; 180 gallons of best red wine!! (Heaven on earth!?) Mary's words to the steward—'Do whatever He tells you to do!' And that is her message to us. Her actions show forth. She was an honoured guest, she noticed the problem, she knew that Jesus would solve it! In addition to her care and love, she was a practical woman!!

These are the three wonders that bring Jesus to the birth: the Magi: His Father's endorsement of His ministry: the first miracle. One further event to come—the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (Feb 2nd): The Lord comes to His temple.

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(This concludes the Advent/Christmas Homilies: rest now until Lent)