

Homily 2nd Sunday of the Year (C) Sunday 17th January, 2010.

Mass Readings: Isaiah 62:1-5; 1 Cor 12:4-11; John 2:1-11.

I'm sure you remember Mrs Merton who was a comedian on TV. She used to have her own chat show onto which famous artists would be invited and then for the next ten minutes or so she would reduce them to rubble and the audience to tears of laughter. Bruce Willis was once being interviewed and, of course, she asked him about his films. "You've made Die Hard I, then there was Die Hard 2, and now I hear you're thinking of making Die Hard 3!" "Yes, that's right," Willis exclaimed joyfully. Mrs Merton looked at him disdainfully and said: "Have you ever heard of flogging a dead horse?"

Well today we have the last part of a trilogy, the third part. The first part was the Epiphany, the second part was last week, the Baptism of the Lord, and this week we have the wedding at Cana. They are a trilogy in which Epiphany, which means disclosure or manifestation is the common theme. So we've had Epiphany I, then Epiphany 2, and this week it's Epiphany 3. Only we aren't flogging a dead horse but entering again into the mystery of Christ and who He is for us. Essential to the Christian vision of God is the faith that the God whom we believe in reveals Himself. He isn't a remote object of worship and obedience simply, but the One who opens His life, His Heart, His Being to us. You may know the Russian iconographer Rublev's famous icon of the Blessed Trinity, where the Father and the Son and the Spirit are portrayed as three angelic beings sitting at a table, at the centre of which is the chalice of the Eucharist. Their faces are turned to each other but the whole icon is one of invitation to the one looking at it, so that that person may take up the fourth place at the table. Our God is the One who endlessly invites us into His Life, Their Life, for our God is Three in One.

So Epiphany, disclosure, is the common theme, but there is within that wider theme of disclosure another interior common theme also. There is something particular about the way God discloses Himself, reveals Himself, and invites us into His life. There is a common approach, a single message. That is that God comes to us, opens Himself up to us, in the most ordinary features of our daily lives, and in the most simple of places, so fundamental that we are likely to be looking elsewhere. The Wise Men travel a long way expecting so much grandeur. They are looking for the birth of a king, so they go to the capital first, to Jerusalem. They search for the royal apartments, bringing suitable gifts, but instead are re-directed to a cave-dwelling, to poverty, anonymity and ordinariness. Beside the river Jordan John the Baptist looks up at the queue of penitents waiting for baptism and spots, among the ordinary faces, the face of the Lamb of God, humbly waiting His turn along with the rest. "I should come to you," John says to Him. "No, let it be like this," Jesus says. Let it be like this – because this is how God is.

At the wedding in Cana, Jesus is lost among the other guests. His mother finds Him and presents the host's problem to Him concerning the lack of wine. He takes what is there before Him, what is abundant, cheap, readily available and used for the most menial everyday tasks – water, and He gives it an altogether new taste and new substance. Which is what He seeks to do with your life and mine. At the offertory of the Mass the priest fills the chalice with wine and then always adds a few drops of water saying as he does so: "By the mixture of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled Himself to share in our

humanity.” In the Mass the bread and wine look the same, taste the same, to all appearances are the same, but under Christ’s blessing their substance, their reality, their purpose for Him are changed. Their appearance is unchanged but their substance is now completely changed in that they are now the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ. *“This is my Body given for you, my Blood shed for you.”* Even so He calls us through His blessing to become His life and His presence in the world – His Body.

A little fish was once discovered by a larger older fish. The little fish was frantically swimming around, desperately in search of something. “What are you looking for?” asked the older fish. “I’m looking for the ocean,” the little fish replied. “The large fish laughed and said: “But you are in the ocean, it is all around you and within you.” “Oh this,” the little fish exclaimed, “But this is only water.” Only water. The wine is in the water. Or as the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote of it:

*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining in shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil crushed.”*

What does he mean by the world? He means that every seemingly mundane action is, because of Christ’s incarnation, charged with the grandeur of God. The humble home in Nazareth, the murky body-stained waters of the river Jordan, the shouts and laughter of the wedding reception, all are charged with the flame of God shining for those who have eyes to see. As is washing and dressing, writing a letter, buying the groceries. But we are elsewhere, distracted, looking for some treasure other than what is already within and around us in abundance.

There was an Irishman called Paddy O’Neill from County Clare in Ireland who had a dream that at one end of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco there lay a huge store of diamonds awaiting discovery. So convinced was he of this that he scrimped and saved for the fare and flew out to San Francisco. He went to the bridge but found to his dismay that, because of the road system, it was impossible to get access to the foot of the bridge and the treasure that he was sure lay hidden there. Everyday he went and stood on a nearby slip-road and puzzled what he could do. One day, a stranger who travelled along that particular road every day on his way to work saw Paddy and asked him if he was lost. Paddy told the stranger his dream. The stranger roared out loud with laughter. “How crazy can you get,” he said. Supposing everyone went off after their dreams looking for treasure in far off places? I once had a dream you know. I once had a dream that there was enormous treasure hidden in a house in County Clare in Ireland, and the house belonged to a man called Paddy O’Neill. But do you think I was going to fly off to Ireland because of that dream? Of course not! In any case, half of Ireland is called Paddy O’Neill!” And off he went to work still laughing and shaking his head in amusement. So Paddy got the next flight back home!

Your world is charged with the grandeur of God. The Mass tells us that everything God has made He loves, takes to Himself, blesses it, and says over it, “This is Me, this is where I am, this is My Body, my Blood. This frail creature is the harbour and vehicle of my presence in the world.” When you receive the host today listen to those words left with you as you return to your place. “This frail creature,” meaning you, “is the harbour and the vehicle of my presence in the world.” What does that mean for you now, here, today?

Supposing people believed, that their own lives were already rich beyond all measure, as they are. Supposing they believed that both within and around them there was grandeur and beauty and wonder beyond description. Supposing they could see that? Would they be so dismissive of themselves, so angry, so jealous, so avaricious, so sad, so violent, so greedy? The most loaded statement perhaps in the whole gospel lies in those seven words of Christ: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." Like Paddy, maybe I must return home, and look for where the treasure already lies in abundance.