

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

Today we celebrate the Epiphany. This means *manifestation* . . . that God manifests Himself. There are three parts to this celebration. The first is the most obvious, since it is part of the Gospel – the Magi coming with their gifts to the Christ-Child – God *manifests* Himself to the Gentiles. The second part is the Baptism of the Lord. The Holy Spirit descends on Jesus in the form of a dove, and the Father speaks from the heavens, “**This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased**” (Matthew 3:17). God manifests Himself at the Baptism. The third part is the Wedding at Cana (John 2), where Jesus performs His first miracle, turning water into wine – God manifests His power and love through this miracle.

God manifests Himself – He reveals Himself – to us in Christ Jesus. St. Paul says in his letter to the Colossians: “**He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God**” (1:15). If we want to know what God looks like, we look at Jesus. St. Philip (like most of us) struggled with this as well. At the last supper, he said to Jesus, “**show us the Father, and that will be enough for us**” (John 14:8). Jesus responds,

Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? (John 14:9)

To see Christ, is to see the Father. This is the amazing thing – the invisible God manifested Himself in a visible way for us to see, to touch, to hear, to embrace, and, in the Eucharist, to smell and taste! God did not want to remain distant from His people, but longed for us to be close to Him, so He humbled Himself and came among us so we could get close to Him!

I’m always in awe of this mystery. We could spend the rest of our lives pondering it! Yet God deigns to humble Himself even more, and *we* too can become manifestations – epiphanies – of God. What do I mean by this? Pope Saint John Paul II (I still am excited to be able to call him SAINT!) said this in one of his Wednesday audiences:

The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It has been created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden from eternity in God, and thus to be a sign of it. (*Theology of the Body* 19:4)

Without the Body of Jesus, God would have remained invisible. St. John Paul asserts, though, that each of *our bodies also make God visible!* It points to the GREAT DIGNITY that we each hold – that our bodies manifest the presence of God. Remember, we were made in the image and likeness of God (cf. Genesis 1:27). Our bodies – not just our invisible souls, but our bodies – have a great dignity; they show the invisible God to the universe! This is why the Church insists on treating the body with great dignity, *even after death* (requiring that the body or remains find a final resting place).

We can choose to cooperate with this mystery or not. As we use our bodies or the bodies of others for our own selfish means, we do not cooperate with this mystery. Our lust, our gluttony, our decisions to fight the way our bodies were made in God’s image all fight this mystery. As we reach out in love to others with our bodies, we cooperate with this mystery. As we use our bodies as they were intended by God, they cooperate with the mystery of making God visible.

As Christ manifested God’s love and power this day, may we truly be manifestations of God’s love to the world, and to the people around us!