

What Percent Proof Is Your Faith!

Isaiah 62¹⁻⁵; Psalm 36⁵⁻¹⁰; 1 Corinthians 12¹⁻¹¹; John 2¹⁻¹¹

But you have kept the good wine until now. [John 2¹⁰]

I have pointed out before that the Orthodox Christians have always regarded the Feast of Christmass as a more private family celebration, but that the Epiphany is the great celebration of recognising the Son of God:

- ✠ In the visit of the Magi the infant Christ is worshipped by those with real influence, but they had to come from outside of God's covenant with Israel as they had become too myopic to recognise anything that God would do.
- ✠ In the Baptism of Jesus we see God the Son, fully human and fully God, baptised in water - this was not for the forgiveness of his sins, but rather to associate with the human race that could do nothing without God's help.
- ✠ In the miracle of water into wine we have heralded the difference that Jesus will make: wine is always a metaphor for joy and the sheer exuberance of the provision - 3,500 glasses - is a sign of God's lavish generosity.

I know that this is the third time I have rehearsed the three foundation stones of the Epiphany, but understanding the Epiphany is to begin to understand what God has done in the incarnation of his Son and heralds how Christians should live.

- ✠ Should we beware of strangers bearing gifts? Certainly not! When Paul writes to the Corinthians giving a sample list of the gifts that will be given by the Holy Spirit, the challenge is for us to recognise God's imagination in things that may not be part of our experience. Can you imagine how vibrant the Church - this Church - would be if we had been able to welcome each wave of immigrants with their energy and had the grace to learn from each other rather than allow so many splinter groups that has resulted in the fragmentation of the body of Christ.
- ✠ Jesus didn't change in his baptism - he was God before it and God after it; he was human before it and human after it. But in his baptism, Jesus immersed himself into the needs of humanity and committed himself to the death that the baptism foreshadowed. It is that immersion that challenges we who live in a generation that seems to have forgotten what commitment is. It is also a

challenge for us to avoid patronising those around us - whether it be family or friends, those of different traditions or those in particular needs - by trying to immerse ourselves in their situation, to see life from their perspective, so that we can be Christ to them.

- ✠ Then we ask, how joyful are we: what percent proof is our faith? The impression on the day of Pentecost was of intoxication, but it seems that we have come to believe in Spirit-Lite that doesn't change either us, the Church or the world. And then how lavish is the practice of our faith?

Two questions in conclusion:

If God acted towards us as we act in response to him, what sort of faith would we have?

If we responded to God as he has acted towards us, what sort of faith would we have?