

## One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism

Three events feature in the first three Sunday Gospels of the year: the Visit of the Magi, the Baptism of Christ and the Marriage Feast at Cana, the subject of today's Gospel, and these three events are linked because they all, in some way, show that Jesus is special. In the first, the star reveals him as the Light of the World, at the baptism, he is revealed as the Son of God, at the marriage feast his divinity is revealed by the first miracle he performs by changing water into wine. His credentials as the Son of God made man are now established and his ministry begins. We know that God is among us in Jesus Christ.

Perhaps, too, there is a link between the Sacraments featured in these events: baptism and marriage. When we are baptised we are joined inseparably with Christ and in marriage we are joined inseparably with our spouse: 'they are no longer two, therefore, but one body', scripture tells us, 'what God has joined together no one may divide' (Matt 19:6). And, in the same way, we are joined to Jesus in baptism 'for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health'. Because of our baptism, Jesus will never abandon us. We may be unfaithful, but he will never break faith with us. This is the point made by the first reading: God's people have been unfaithful, they have turned away from the one true God and worshipped idols, but he will never abandon them. Same for us; because of our baptism, God will never forsake us, no matter how far we stray, not even in sin, not even in death. 'Nothing can separate us from the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Romans 8:39).

If we are joined to Jesus inseparably in our baptism, are we not, thereby, also joined inseparably to every other baptised person? Are we not thereby, parts of one body in Christ and does this not mean that, just as in a marriage, we have a responsibility to love, cherish and care for those we are bound to in love? All those around us here today are our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are family, and this means that, just as in our own family, we have the responsibility to look out for one another, care for one another, so we have the same responsibility to those around us here. You are sitting in the bench with members of your family, but those beside them and those behind you and those in front of you, and those standing at the back of church are also members of your own family - through baptism. And we have a duty of care, in Christ, to love them and care for them.

And it doesn't stop there. This is Christian Unity Sunday. By baptism we are one with all our sisters and brothers in the Christian family because 'there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is Father of us all'. Anything that divides us from other Christians is not of God because in baptism we have all been given the same Spirit, God's Spirit and that Spirit is emphatically not a spirit of division. It is a spirit of unity

and harmony for it is the same Spirit which unites in love the persons of the Holy Trinity.

That Spirit has been given to us all to drink, as St Paul says: 'In the one Spirit we were all baptised, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as citizens, and one Spirit was given to us all to drink' (1 Corinthians 12:13). You could say then that in one Spirit we were all baptised, Anglicans as well as Catholics, Baptists as well as Methodists, Non-conformists as well as Evangelicals, Syro-Malabar rite as well as Latin rite, Greek Orthodox as well as Russian Orthodox. Because we have all received the Spirit of Christ, we are all one Body in Christ, we all belong to Christ and because we all belong to Christ, we all belong to one another.

But, as St Paul tells us in today's second reading, all of us in the Body of Christ, have different gifts and some churches and other denominations manifest and perfect different gifts than we typically find in the Catholic Church, and these are to be treasured since, as St Paul again tells us, *together* we make up the Body of Christ. So let us work to love and respect each other and the variety of gifts we variously bring to enrich the Body of Christ. Let us understand and accept each other even if we cannot fully agree. Working for unity unity doesn't mean we have to have uniformity, and we can agree to differ and resolve to love because love is the one thing we have in common through the Spirit of God which binds us together.