

**Tribus miráculis * ornátum diem sanctum cólimus: hódie stella Magos duxit ad
præsépium: hódie vinum ex aqua factum est ad núptias: hódie in Iordáne a Ioánne
Christus baptizári vóluit, ut salváret nos, allelúia.**

*This day we keep a holiday in honour of three wonders, * this day a star led the wise men to the manger; this day at the marriage, water was made wine; this day was Christ, for our salvation, pleased to be baptized of John in Jordan. Alleluia.*

Magnificat Antiphon for the Feast of the Epiphany

Today's feast of the Baptism of Our Lord brings the week-long mini-season of Epiphanytide to a close, and with it the end of our Christmas celebrations proper, even though the season of Christmastide continues in a muted form up until the feast of Candlemas on 2nd February.

The feast of the Nativity – of Our Lord's birth in the stable – celebrates the coming into this world of the Only-Begotten Son of God in human flesh. But the feasts that follow all mark His being made known to the world into which He has come. The various saints whose feast days fall in the Octave of the Nativity – St Stephen, St John the Apostle, and the Holy Innocents – give witness to the presence of the Incarnate Son of God, the long-awaited Messiah, to a world which, nonetheless, does not recognize Him and does not pay Him homage.

But then the Church holds before our eyes three wonderful events, each of which makes known the glory of the God-made-Man to those of us who have eyes to see and the faith to believe.

First, we see the arrival of the Wise Men from the East who, having followed the light of a star, find their way to the place where the Christ Child is born. And having found Him, they fall down in adoration and present to Him their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Second, we see John the Baptist baptize Our Lord in the waters of the River Jordan. We see the heavens open, and we hear the voice of the Father saying, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.’

And soon we shall see the first miracle of Our Lord when water is changed into wine at the Wedding Feast in Cana, in Galilee. It is with the accomplishment of these three events that the Son first ‘manifested His glory’ (Jn 2:11) and the world has first made known to it ‘the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father’ (Jn 1:14).

In the Prologue – the first fourteen verses – to his Gospel St John tells us that the Son of God is the light of the world, and that that light ‘shines in the darkness’ of this world but that the darkness comprehended it not (Jn 1:5). Even so, the light shone forth into the darkness for a very specific purpose for, as St John goes on to explain, whilst many received Him not (Jn 1:11) nevertheless for ‘as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name’ (Jn 1:12). It was for this that the Word was made flesh (Jn 1:14).

Cast your mind back to the Garden of Eden and to the Fall of Man on the occasion of Adam’s original sin. Allowing himself to be deceived by the serpent, Adam tried to become his own god through his own efforts. As a result, he was cast out of Paradise, where the light was that God had created on the first day of creation and from which God had separated the darkness so that His creatures could live in the light. For century after century, indeed millennium after millennium, God had prepared the way for Man’s return to the light. And now, with the coming into the world of the One who *is* light, God superabundantly makes the glory of that light manifest for all to see: first, in the brilliance of the new star, second, in the revelation of the Triune God on the banks of the Jordan, and third, in the manifestation of the Messiah’s power over nature as water is changed into wine, and the order of nature gives way to the order of grace.

Tribus miraculis: ‘This day we keep a holiday in honour of three wonders.’

And what difference does any of this make to us ordinary folk at the beginning of the second quarter of the twenty-first century? St Paul, in his Letter to the Thessalonians, tells us:

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. For all you are the children of light, and children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as others do; but let us watch, and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunk, are drunk in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, having on the breastplate of faith and charity, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

1 Thessalonians 5:4-8

In this Holy Year dedicated to the theological virtue of hope, we are reminded that we have what others do not. Hope is for us, as St Paul says, a helmet that protects us from the despondency and despair of a world that sleep-walks its way in darkness, with its eyes glued to the false light of its myriad electronic screens.

By contrast, we walk in the day as children of the day. And it is exactly this that the *Tribus miraculis* – the three wonders of the Incarnation – have given us.