

This month's reflection is an extract from a sermon for the Epiphany by St Peter Chrysologus, Bishop of Ravenna in the fifth century. He speaks about the three interwoven themes of the feast: the manifestation ("Epiphany") of Christ to the Gentiles, represented by these strange foreign visitors "from the East", the baptism of Jesus by John "the Forerunner" and Jesus' first miracle at the wedding in Cana

"Today the Magus, the wise man, finds weeping in a crib him who he sought for shining stars. Today the wise man reveres clearly revealed in swaddling clothes him whom he had long patiently awaited unseen in the heavens.

Today the wise man ponders in profound amazement over what he sees there: heaven on earth, earth and heaven, man in God, God in man, and him of whom the whole universe cannot contain, confined in a tiny body. And immediately on seeing, he professes with mystical gifts what he believes and does not argue: he acknowledges God with frankincense, the King with gold, with myrrh the mortal one destined to die.....

Today Christ entered the river Jordan, to wash away the world's sin: John himself bears witness that he came for this: "behold the Lamb of God, behold him and takes away the sins of the world." Today the servant holds the Lord, man holds God, John holds Christ: holds him, is about to receive not to grant forgiveness....

Today the Holy Spirit floats over the waters in the form of a dove so that by this sign it might be known that the world's universal shipwreck has ceased, as the dove had announced an hour that the world's flight had subsided....

Today Christ gives the beginnings of the signs from heaven, when he changes water into wine. But water was to be changed into the mystery of the blood, so that Christ, from the goblet of his Body might give pure draughts to those who drink."