

Agnus Dei
(Mass of St Thomas)

A prayer of St Ephraem, before the reading of holy scripture: Lord Jesus Christ open the eyes and ears of my spirit, so that I may hear and understand your word and accomplish your will, for here on earth I am in exile. Do not keep your commandments hidden from me. Draw the veil from my eyes, and let me behold the wonders of your law. Open to me the hidden, secret places of my heart and of your wisdom. For in you, God, I put my trust, I count on you to enlighten my heart and understanding.

Here in HK, we rather miss out now (in the Church's celebration of the mystery of Christ through the year) on the formal ending of the Christmas season in the liturgy. That was yesterday: but here we keep that Sunday as a day of prayer for peace, so skipping the very long-standing celebration of the Baptism of Christ, which is observed elsewhere, with a renewed emphasis since the reform of the Church calendar a few years ago. Well, to pray together for peace in the world may well be a much more meaningful focus of our Sunday worship and prayer (as it is certainly needed), than would be the celebration of the Baptism of Christ. But today, not being Sunday, perhaps I can invite you to reflect and contemplate a little on the observance we've skipped over. For it's not just the historical detail that's in question, but its significance. And it's long been linked, in liturgical celebration, with Christmas - with Epiphany, specifically, as the manifestation and revelation of Christ to the world. Much of the early Christian writing and preaching on Epiphany has linked together the story of the Magi coming to find the Christ-child, the Baptism of Christ, and the miracle of Jesus at Cana in

Galilee. For in each, the power and presence of God in our human world, in Christ, is publicly revealed. And in each, as for each of us who is baptised, the birth of Christ is proclaimed. Christmas, in other words, is still with us, still happening today, in every baptism: Christ is born in you and me, in every person who is re-born to the life and love God gives us to share. What was, in a way, hidden in the crib at Bethlehem is now made manifest: God, Father Son and Holy Spirit is among us, with us. But I want, today, to let you hear something from one of the Fathers of the Church, speaking about Epiphany. So, let's now have our prayer in music, first: "Fill the Pats with water"

MUSIC

PRAYERS

From a sermon for Epiphany by St Peter Chrysologus @Q. [Brev. In 7 p 330]