

The Epiphany of the Lord

Is. 60. 1-6, Ephesians 3.2-3, 5-6, Mt. 2. 1-12

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church the word “Epiphany” refers to the “feast which celebrates the manifestation to the world of the newborn Christ as Messiah, Son of God, and Savior of the world. The feast of the Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (magi) from the East, together with His baptism in the Jordan and the wedding feast of Cana in Galilee.” We gather here today to celebrate the manifestation, the uncovering or revealing of Christ. God is calling upon us to **seek** Him, to have a relationship with Him.

Today the prophet Isaiah speaks of people from afar, who journey to the new City. Isaiah is speaking not only of a physical journey but of a spiritual journey. This is a call to **seek** Christ (the anointed one). Isaiah is first referencing the people of Judah who had been dispersed all around the world. Yet, all who come are of one family, springing from the first parents of the human race.

In reviewing the readings of the past few weeks, we see the identity of Jesus Christ is revealed to us in stages. First to Mary and Joseph, then to the shepherds, next to the Magi. The shepherds represent the poor while the Magi represent the pagan believers and intellectuals. The Magi who traveled from the east seeking the newborn King. The Magi are believed to have come from Median and Persian priestly origins, they are Gentiles. Yet, they seek Him, Jesus! They are on a journey. Their journey was not an easy one. They traveled through difficult terrain, through difficult situations. Very similar to each one of us on our journey with God.

In chapter 2 of his Gospel, Matthew introduces two contrasting responses to the Messiah. On one hand the Gentile magi from the east **seek** “the newborn king of the Jews” in order “to do Him homage” (2.2). Where on the other hand, Herod and his court **seek** the Christ child in order “to destroy Him” (2.13). So, after 2,000 years what has changed? In our world, we spend our life seeking Christ, while many of the secular world continues to do all they can to prevent us from seeking, to prevent the spreading of the Good News. Think of how the Magi began their spiritual journey; motivated by the revelation of God manifested in nature – a star, this is a key revelation.

The Magi have knowledge of who they are seeking when they tell Herod they are seeking, “He who has been born King of the Jews.” This statement, this identification of Jesus will follow Him until His crucifixion, but it also reveals Jesus’ mission, which is to establish the Kingdom of heaven (Mt. 4.17). Herod’s chief priests and scribes quote the Prophet Micah (5.2) “that the child was to be born in Bethlehem. I find it very interesting that Bethlehem translated means House of Bread and when the Magi arrive in Bethlehem they find the child Jesus in a manger, a feeding trough. They recognize the real presence

of Jesus before them. The Magi prostrate themselves to an infant child, recognizing the real presence of the King! We need to recognize Jesus' real presence in the Eucharist!

St. Thomas Aquinas writes: "in the Persian language, philosophers and wise men are called magi. Indeed, these men came to Jesus because they recognized that the glory of the wisdom which they possessed was from Christ." The gifts of the Magi are gold which represents Christ's kingship. The frankincense represents His divinity. The myrrh represents His humility, especially in His death. The Magi do not simply kneel before Christ; they prostrated themselves on their faces and did Him homage, they laid themselves prostrate to an infant! This manifestation of Christ was NOT and is NOT meant to be kept a secret. We are all called to share the news of Jesus Christ.

I am guessing everyone here doesn't have gold to give the King, the Savior. But we are rich in that we can adore Jesus Christ anytime. Our Church is open, we have Eucharistic adoration every first Friday of the month. We have available to us Eucharistic adoration at St. Francis Hospital.

It seems every year many people make New Year's resolutions. I will not ask you to do that, rather I will challenge you to attend adoration once a week for one hour at the hospital or perhaps if that is too much, I strongly encourage you to attend our parish adoration hour on the first Friday every month. We also have the gift of prayer, to pray and offer prayer for our neighbor. To invite Jesus into our lives, into our household more today than yesterday. I challenge each one of us to strengthen our relationship with Jesus Christ. I challenge you to add one Mass per week to your schedule.

We focus on time way too often! But remember time belongs to God, not to us! As we grow in our relationship with God, we have a perfect example to imitate in Mary and St. Joseph. Mary and St. Joseph were humble and very obedient to God. They had nothing, no riches to offer God, but what they offered was themselves. We too can offer ourselves.

As we celebrate the Epiphany- the manifestation of the Lord let us offer gifts. The gift of ourselves, our time, our love. God is present here and now just as he was over 2,000 years ago. God is calling to each one of us. As we prepare to receive the Eucharist, let us see the real presence of Jesus Christ before us. We, like the Magi, can show Jesus great reverence when we kneel before His real presence in the Eucharist. Let us receive Jesus and ask Him to abide in us. Let us pray to allow God to abide in us today and always.