

**EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD; Cycle- A; Jan. 8<sup>th</sup> 2023**  
**Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6; Mt. 2: 1-12**

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

As you may know, the gospels were written more than 30-50 years after the resurrection of Christ and by that time different Christian communities were already formed. The Jewish people called all the non-Jewish the gentiles, no matter what part of the world they lived. So there existed only two groups of Christians such as the Jewish converts and gentile converts. Matthew, as a Jew wrote his gospel mainly for the Jewish Christians. Hence he emphasized the incidents and teachings of Jesus which would help his community. As the Jews were very familiar with the Scripture, Matthew wanted to show them how the Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in the birth and mission of Jesus. That is why, when you read the gospel of Matthew you come across many Old Testament quotations and at the end of each one, Matthew affirms that this prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

We may wonder, what the visit of Magi to baby Jesus to do with the faith formation of the Jewish Christians? Their visit is exclusive to Matthew as the visit of shepherds is found only in Luke. Matthew had a very special reason to record the account of the Magi's visit. Remember, the Jews were the chosen race of God and they kept unhealthy pride in their minds for this special privilege. Eventually they reached a point to believe that only the Jews would be granted eternal life and all those who were outside of Jewish community would be destined to eternal punishment. And also they believed that the Messiah would be born only to save the Jewish people. When many Jews became Christians they did not leave their superiority complex, but held it in a different way. In other words the Jewish Christians believed that they were the chosen race and all others would be destined to damnation. This problem became acute when the gentiles started coming to the Church and the Jewish Christians started considering the gentile Christians as secondary citizens. St. Paul who was the apostle of the gentiles had to fight for their cause with the Jewish Christians. In today's second reading Paul makes very clear about the equal privilege of the gentiles, in these words: **"The gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."** Matthew too wanted to break the Jewish Christians' pride with this episode of Magi. As Matthew puts it, the first revelation or manifestation of Jesus was given to **the Magi who were gentiles** and not to the Jews. According to Christian Tradition the Magi/Wise Men represented three different continents and **their names were given as Melchior who was from**

**Asia; Balthazar from Persia and Caspar was African.** Thus as Matthew looks at, they represented almost the whole world outside of Jewish community. So with this one incident God has given the message that **His Son was sent to save the whole human race regardless of Jews and gentiles.** During his public ministry Jesus never showed any discrimination against the gentiles; rather he taught and worked miracles in their regions too.

In the Magi episode **one thing Matthew emphasizes is that salvation is universal and not the exclusive right of a particular race.** Jesus is born for all races and salvation is open to anyone who makes effort to achieve it. That is what John says in his gospel chapter 3, “...*everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.*” In fact, nobody is left out here; rather **‘everyone’ is included.**

Through the episode of the Magi, Matthew throws light on a great truth about our Christian pilgrimage or journey towards Jesus. As soon as the Magi saw an unusual star they didn't remain idle; rather they set out to see the reason of its origin. They took a long hazardous journey, investing their time, talents and money. They stopped their endeavor only after they had found Jesus. Their journey is the symbol of their inward journey towards Jesus Christ. **It was a journey from their paganism to belief in Jesus. No doubt, they went back as changed people.**

Our life, as described in Christian literature, is a journey to meet Jesus. Our journey started the moment when we were baptized and it will continue till we meet Jesus and being fully converted and become one with him. It is said that the Magi followed a special star which was vague sign for them to reach Jesus. **Today the star which we see is Jesus Christ himself and it is a clear sign for us.** What we need is just to focus on that star and continue our journey. The positive reaction of the Magi to the sign they have seen, brought them to Jesus. Unfortunately, the scholars and the priests in the palace of Herod knew where the Messiah would be born; but their negative attitude took away their opportunity to see Jesus. In the modern age, millions of people have great opportunity to meet Jesus, but they refuse to take it. Today among the two billion Christians who saw the star, only 10-15% travel towards the star. Others are still in darkness and they travel to the opposite direction away from the star. Thus the lamentation of St. John continues in the world, **“And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil” (Jn. 3:19).**