

Epiphany-C

This Sunday we celebrate the Epiphany of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The word 'epiphany' comes from the Greek language "epiphaneia" which means 'appearance', 'showing forth' or 'manifestation'. So we could say that we celebrate the manifestation of the Lord –the light of the world. The feast of the Epiphany originated in the third century to commemorate the first appearance of Christ (the infant King) to the entire world as Savior.

The first reading from Isaiah speaks of our light that has come and "the glory of Lord" that shines upon us. This light shining through the darkness and the clouds is a wonderful image describing what the Epiphany of the Lord proclaims. Our own darkness and the clouds of our lack of understanding so often make it difficult for us to recognize the presence of God, in daily life, in the Lord Jesus, in the Church or in other people.

Psalm 72 focuses on the nations coming to adore the Lord. "Lord, every nation on earth will adore you" and then speaks of kings from foreign lands bringing gifts to the Lord. The Psalm in a sense introduces the Gospel of today that recounts the story of the three wise kings or Magi from the East who represent all the nations.

These Magi come as seekers of the source of the light. The star is only a guide for them. On finding the true source of light, the infant king, they are overjoyed, they confess, worship him and offer him gifts. In the preface of the Epiphany, we get a sense of the mystery we celebrate. "Today you revealed in Christ your eternal plan of salvation and showed in him as the light of all peoples". The mystery of Christ's birth, the mystery of the Incarnation, is therefore made known to all people of the world without exception. St. Paul in the second reading speaks about the inclusive nature of salvation in God's plan, because "the Gentiles are now co-heirs with the Jews....through the preaching of the Gospel."

The central message of the Epiphany is that Jesus is revealed to us as the light to the nations. The Magi go in search of this light guided by a star until they find the source of the light in Bethlehem. With them we too seek and recognize the child who is born to be our Savior. Like them, we too pay homage to Christ and accept the light that Christ brings into our hearts.

The gifts of the Magi are meant to express our human awe and reverence at the true inner nature of the Christ child. Gold, the currency of kings, is given to Him. Frankincense is the gift given to priests, bringing us into contact with the world of mystery and transcendence, and they offer sacrifice on our behalf. Myrrh is an ointment used in the preparation of a body for burial; its significance being quite obvious in terms of this child's destiny, as well as our own human destiny. Death is a mystery we all enter into as equals, regardless of how important or significant our lives have been during our time here on earth.

Since we are led to discover Christ, we are therefore called to go out and share with others the Good News revealed to us. Through our daily witness, in loving others, in forgiving them, in our faith and compassion, in our courage and perseverance, may we be like the star that guides them in their journey of faith, to seek and to discover Christ in their lives. The message we take home is two-fold:

First, we are invited today to recognize God's light, God's presence in our lives in the person, life, mission and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and to let our hearts rejoice and throb and overflow because we know that God is with us. Secondly, we are called to go out and share with others this Good News of Jesus Christ revealed to us; to generously share far and wide the light that Christ has given us through faith and grace today and every day of our lives. Amen.

- Fr. David M. Chiantella