

Feast of The Epiphany

January 3, 2021

All Years RCL

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7,10-14; Matthew 2:1-12

"We observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage."

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"Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?"

This is the question from the wise men to King Herod, where is the child who has been born? King Herod in hearing this news was frightened and reacts with violence to the menace of losing his power and position. "When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men." (Mt 2:16) We celebrate the memory of these children in the Feast of the Holy Innocents after Christmas Day on December 28th and the Feast of The Epiphany is celebrated on January 6th.

To facilitate the participation of a bigger audience, most of the Christian denominations have transferred the feast of The Epiphany to Sunday, just as we are doing today. The Epiphany commemorates the “manifestation” or “showing forth” (Theophany) (“manifestation of God”) where the wise men from the East arrive to Bethlehem of Judea the birthplace of King David to recognize the kingship of the Newborn King Jesus and worship his divinity.

The fact that these wise men, scholars of the astrology, recognize in the skies a leading star that conduce them to Jesus proves that God’s revelation is for all people across cultures, languages, and social backgrounds. At Christmas, we celebrate the Incarnation of God, and in the Epiphany, we witness how this mystery of salvation of the God made flesh is universal. These “wise men from the East came to Jerusalem” because they receive the sign they were expecting and looking for a long time. We can say that the leading star was for them the fulfilment of a prophecy. Years of waiting time and the study of the astrology ended finally with this spectacular manifestation of God outside of the regularity of their lives.

The story of God’s manifestation in Christmas is more complex and enriching of what we can imagine. The angels, shepherds, Mary the Virgin, and Joseph the faithful servant, now have the company of the wise men from the East.

Notice how the narrative of the gospels shows who God's manifestation and revelation uses the elements of the creation to show forth its power and glory. The divinity of God is fully on display in the simple elements of our humanity. In doing this God is preparing our minds to experience the sacraments and showing that his promise of being with us forever until the end of the ages (Mt28:20) is a reality that never ceases.

As we begin a new calendar year, it is worth to see how these wise men pursue with discipline, dedication, and courage the revelation of the leading star. They were not afraid of following the star, leaving everything behind, and trusting in the light from heaven that take them outside of their comfort zone. They cross the limits of their own country and go to unknown places because they know that they will receive more of what they were offering to the Newborn King. I would like to invite you in this new year to trust God and follow his leading star, offer to God what you have and who you are, and never be afraid of obeying him.

In the same way, God supported and led the wise men through the sign of the star, He continually is revealing His presence and love to us. God's revelation never stops, rather it depends on each one of us to perceive and be open to the signs of where God is leading and preceding us.

“When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.”

The end of our journey like the wise men will have joy only when we have found God. The overwhelmed joy of which the gospel speaks of, is one of the expressions of God’s presence. All the sorrow, sufferance, and distress of the journey is now transformed into speechless happiness to be in the presence of God. As we begin the new year, never forget that the human destiny and fulfilment is only in God. The journey of the wise men is a testimony to our faith today. They never knew for how long the star was going to have them travel, neither did they know their destination or the challenges they would face. They followed obediently and trusted the leading star which reflects their faith and commitment. They have the determination to worship the Newborn King, thus they were able to follow the star, and kneel before Jesus, paying him homage and offering the gifts they had prepared for him.

We can say that our journey of faith is similar to theirs, most of the time we cannot explain where we are going or how our journey will take us on roads we prefer to avoid. But as they did, we need to trust without vacillation and keep going. We, like the wise men are following Jesus day by day, carrying our

crosses, learning to live faithfully; we need to trust more in God and rely on Him wherever we go.

These wise men were masters of spiritual life, they were seekers of God to the point of risking their own lives, leaving their countries and families to pay homage to the child who is born. We need to learn from them as nothing is more important than God.

“The Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you.” The newborn King is the light to the nations, the light we need to illuminate our lives.

Notice that the Gospel of Matthew mentions the title the King of Jews in two moments- here when Jesus was born, and again in the moment of His passion and crucifixion. It seems that this Gospel is anticipating that the Child who is born is the real and only King of the Jews. Also, the gifts that the wise men present to Jesus shows their understanding of the divine nature of this Newborn Child and in anticipation of Jesus’ passion and crucifixion.

As we gather each week to worship, we need to imitate the wise men paying homage to our King and Savior. I invite you to be generous with God, open the chests of your life, and all that you are and all that you have, offer this to God. I guarantee you, in finding God, you will be complete and experience the overwhelmed joy that lacks nothing. Amen.