

Homily for The Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

(Is 60:1-6; Eph 3:2- 3a, 5-6; Mt. 2: 1-12)

After Jesus was revealed to the shepherds at his birth by the angels, after being revealed to the people of Israel represented in the temple by Simeon and Anne, now comes the time to reveal him to the world. Today the Church celebrates the feast of the Epiphany. Epiphany is a Greek word that means a revelation or a manifestation. This feast is about the manifestation of Jesus as Messiah and Savior of the world. It means that the newborn Savior was revealed to the whole world, including the pagans represented by the wise men. The Feast of the epiphany is also the official end of the Christmas Season and a reason to celebrate all the joys and pleasures of Christmas.

Today the Gospel of Matthew (2:1-12) tells us three kings from afar came bearing gifts for the newborn king. We know the story well of the three men called Magi in Matthew's gospel; but elsewhere they are called "wise men" or "astrologers," and still in other places they are called "kings." These wise men traveled thousand miles across the desert sands to a distant land to worship and offer gifts to the child Jesus who would be Lord and Savior. Let us not look so much at who or what these three men were, but rather let us see what they did out of faith.

But it was not as simple as it sounds. When the wise men saw the strange star in the sky which they knew it was a special star. They believed that the star was a sign from God, announcing the birth of an infant King. The wise men set out to search the infant King of the Jews. Well, they just followed the star. The solution is as simple as that. But not really that easy because obviously at times, they couldn't see the star in the sky and that is why they ended up in Jerusalem because they supposed that the infant King would be born in a big city.

Well, at least the wise men were wise enough to ask for direction. Their question of where is the infant King of the Jews had its answer with the help of the star. Now they just need a bit of help from the Jewish scripture scholars. The search of the wise men began with a question "where is the newborn king of the Jews?" the answer was to follow the star. After their audience with the king they set out to the Bethlehem. They followed the very bright star that appeared during the time of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. This star guided and it led them right to Bethlehem. There they found the Christ Child who was born lying in the manger surrounded by His mother Mary and Joseph, His foster father. When they found the newborn king, they immediately prostrated themselves and worshiped Him.

The feast of the Epiphany is also rich in the wonderful symbol of gift giving. Christian tradition tells us that the Wise Men brought to the child Jesus gifts of **Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh**.

The giving of gifts deeply symbolizes the whole of God's relationship with us. According to some spiritual interpretation and tradition, these gifts presented by the Magi to the Child Jesus, reveal in a way his identity.

The story of the Magi focuses on their long journey in diligent searching for the Savior of the world. In the Nativity scene, the three of them look so royal, so finely dressed, so elegant and dignified, compared with Mary and Joseph and the shepherd, and not to mention the cow and the sheep. But in reality, they would be worn out as well as stressed out. Their journey of a thousand miles or more from their countries in the East could have taken almost three months. They were foreigners in a foreign land, and they were taken advantage of by King Herod to be his agents and informants of the whereabouts of the Infant King of the Jews. As a matter of fact, it was a journey of their faith, for it was through the grace of God that the Magi were led to faith in Jesus.

As we listen to our gospel, which is a very nice story, about how God guided the three wise men to the Baby Jesus by means of a special star as a map. How nice it would be for each of us to have a star as map to follow in the right direction. Or as we travel through life, we need a star or a map too. Well all of us have stars to follow in the right direction. God has given us the Bible to be our map or star on the journey through life. But sometimes the Bible is difficult for us to understand and it is hard to know the way we should go. God knew that, so He sent the Holy Spirit to be our guide. The Holy Spirit helps us to understand the Scripture and guides us in the right direction. That is what Jesus promised his disciples that God would send the Holy Spirit "to guide you in all truth." That means that the Holy Spirit will help us to understand God's Word which always points us in the right direction. It points us to Jesus who is "the Way, the truth, and the life." So in trying to find our way through life's journeys, God has given us a spiritual map to guide us. That guide is the Holy Spirit. Whenever we don't know what to do or which way to turn, you can always turn to God's Word and let the Holy Spirit be your guide. We thank God for sending the Holy Spirit to be our guide through life. We know that the Spirit will lead us to Jesus.

Brothers and Sisters,

Like the Magi was to follow the star and find the newborn king, we too are on a journey of faith to find baby Jesus, our Savior. Our journey of faith is seeking for loving God every week here in the Holy Mass. So we find Jesus and Savior on our journey of faith. Just as God revealed Himself to the Magi, He continues to reveals himself to all people since God is not hiding from us, but He wants to have an intimate relationship with each of us. Especially God reveals himself to us during Mass through the Word of God and Eucharist. He shares himself with us in the bread of wine that we receive. Let us open our hearts to welcome Him into our lives and he will live within us.