

Homily of Epiphany of the Lord Year A

The word 'Epiphany' comes from the Greek word *epiphania* which means 'revelation,' or 'manifestation.' Epiphany can be defined as a sudden and profound understanding, or realization, or disclosure of something. Before the arrival of the Magi (the wise men), it was only the shepherds and those the shepherds informed who knew that Jesus had been born. As we have read in today's Gospel, it was the Magi who announced the birth of Jesus to King Herod and his officials. From then, the news of the birth of Jesus was publicly revealed. This is one of the reasons the visit of the Magi is called Epiphany, meaning the disclosure or revelation of the Lord to the world.

The Magi were astronomers who observed the stars and other celestial bodies. They saw a spectacular star which they rightly interpreted to mean the birth of a great king. From the East, (which was then known as Persia, now region of Iran), they followed the star and the journey to Jerusalem. On arriving in Jerusalem, they went to see King Herod. The Magi who were non-Jews was an indication that it was very necessary from the very beginning, the birth of Jesus was also revealed to the non-Jewish world. Each of the Magi came with a gift: gold, frankincense and myrrh. The gifts further reveal who Jesus is. Gold represents his kingship, frankincense represents his priesthood, and myrrh represents his death for the salvation of the world.

How can we participate in the mystery of the Epiphany? The Magi followed the star and journeyed thousands of miles to meet Jesus. The same way, we are to follow Jesus who is our Star to meet God. The closer we follow Jesus, the more divine revelation and manifestation we receive and experience. Jesus says in Luke 10:22, "All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him." We pray for divine revelations and manifestations in every aspect of our existence. We pray that we give testimonies of many epiphanies in the New Year. Amen.

The Magi brought gifts to Jesus. What are our gift to Jesus? Three most important gifts are (1) Love of God, by living a life pleasing to him. (2) Love of neighbor, by being stewards and channels of God's graces and blessings to one another. (3) Love of church, by our presence, prayers, and generous support and contributions.

I am sure that it was not only the Magi that saw the star. Some people saw the same star, but it meant nothing to them. Some people saw the star, knew that the star signified something different, but did nothing. Only the Magi, after seeing the star, followed the star, and met Jesus. The wise men's journey took them through hills, deserts, rivers, and months. Not even Herod could stop them from getting to their determined destination. The level of perseverance and passion determine the level of success. We are invited to be observant, and let determination and action follow what we observe.

At the birth of Jesus, the angels praised and glorified God, the shepherd and all who heard about it also praised and glorified God, the Magi were overjoyed, but when King Herod heard it, "he was greatly troubled and all Jerusalem with him." King Herod asked the Magi to return to him after seeing Jesus, but they listened to God's warning and departed by another way. The Scripture tells us how King Herod, prompted by anger and jealousy, ordered the killing of innocent children. King Herod represents forces of evil and darkness that battle to overshadow or stifle God's goodness. Let us not be agents of evil and darkness as Herod was. If the celebration of Christmas and the New Year has lifted us out of evil and darkness, let us be wise like the Magi and do not return to the way of evil and darkness. Let us depart by another way; the way of

Jesus who leads us to God.

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