

My dear people of God, today is **the Epiphany of our Lord Jesus Christ**. The Greek word "**epiphany**" means God's appearance or manifestation of himself in human history. This solemnity brings out a prominent aspect of the Christmas Mystery, namely, the manifestation of the universal dominion of the Newborn King, and the readings for today's Mass describe this manifestation as **a light that appears in a world covered in darkness** (Is. 60:1). Christ's coming meant that God didn't leave us in the darkness. He intervened, and made it possible for us to respond to his truth, grace and love, and so come into the light. The following are some of the manifestations of Jesus: at his birth in Bethlehem, **the shepherds recognized him as their Savior** (Lk.2:10-11); 2, making himself known to the wise men from the East (Mt.2:6); 3, at his baptism the Spirit of God descending upon him and reviewed him as the Beloved **Son of God** (Mt.3:17); Finally, changing water into wine at Cana, his disciples "**put their faith in him**" (Jn. 2:12). Let us focus on today's readings.

Matthew does not tell us the names of the wise men. In the West, they have traditionally been given the names Gaspar, Melchior and Balthazar. The journey the wise men made to Bethlehem was not their only journey. They also made **a journey in their hearts from paganism to worshipping true God**. On our part, each and everyone has a journey to make to Jesus, because none of us is yet fully converted and each of us has **corners in our hearts and lives in need of Jesus' healing and redemption**. We pray that God may lead us like them ever closer to his Son Jesus. We pray that all nations may come to know that Jesus is the one Savior so that all nations may fall prostrate before him.

Some scholars have tried to show that there was indeed a special "Star of Bethlehem." Michael Molnar in his book *The Star of Bethlehem: The Legacy of the Magi* and David Hughes in his book *The Star of Bethlehem: An Astronomer's Confirmation* have researched on the extraordinary celestial conditions that could account for the Star of Bethlehem. Many documents and archeological finds prove the historical reliability of events and people related in the Bible. The most important thing for us is the meaning of Sacred Scripture for us and so today, I would like to reflect on the meaning of the visit of the Magi to Jesus.

We imagine ourselves in the presence of baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph. We are surprised to see men of eastern appearance. They see the baby Jesus and **fall on their knees**. They offered him homage and gave him presents of gold, frankincense and myrrh (Mt.2:11); gold because Jesus is king, frankincense (an ancient air purifier and perfume) since Jesus is divine and myrrh prefiguring his Passion and death. In the opinion of Raymond E. Brown, the first two chapters of Matthew's Gospel and Luke's, come under the heading "**infancy narratives**." He described them in his Book (*The Birth of the Messiah, Image Books*, New York: 1979) as a "Gospel in miniature," in which the evangelist has set forth the basic tenets of the Good News, namely: the universal scope of salvation; an affirmation of Jesus' Divine origins and Messianic mission; the implications of God's plan and of Jesus' mission for the Church.

There were three groups of people who reacted to the Epiphany of Christ. First, King Herod was so envious that he tried to eliminate Christ. Second, priests and scribes, because of their indifference, ignored him, Third, the shepherds and the Magi; who were seeking friendship, came to adore him. Let us make sure that we belong to the third group: by actively worshipping Jesus at Mass with the gold of our love and seeking His friendship. Let us approach Christ with the myrrh of our humility and the frankincense of our adoration. Once we do this God will give us a new sense of direction in our lives. Just as He directed the Magi to choose another route to go home, God will teach us a better way of life, abstaining from sin, and impure thoughts, evil habits and selfish behavior; so that we will be the stars leading people to Jesus, as the star led the Magi to Jesus.

Finally, dear friends, when the wise men arrived in Jerusalem, it seems they no longer had the guidance of the star; that is why they asked Herod for help. Sometimes we too feel as if we're in the dark, like the magi. Sometimes what we relied on seems not to be there anymore. Sometimes we see only darkness around us. But the good news is that we know that God is there, and that eternal life awaits us even if sometimes in this world there is no star for us. Let us pray that, in our moments of darkness, without a star, may God help us not to give up but to keep searching, hoping and praying till we see him, love him and worship him like the wise men. May each day in our life be a continuous searching for Christ so that we will have intimate relationship with him now and forever. Amen!