

Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord C/2016

The readings of this feast of the Epiphany of our Lord talk about the universality of God. They show that God is the savior of all the nations of the earth, represented by the magi, and not only of the people of Israel. They invite us to pay him our homage and to adore him.

The first reading describes the universality of God from the background of Israel's return from exile. It shows that Jerusalem will become the light of the nations as the glory of the Lord will shine in the city. It also describes the joy of Jerusalem as her sons and daughters will return home, bringing with them the riches from the nations. The text finishes by highlighting the pilgrimage of the kings of the East who will come to Jerusalem in order to worship by bringing their gifts for the praise and the glory of God.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is not the exclusive property of Israel, but rather of all the people of the earth. There is also the idea that because all the nations belong to God, one day they will all glory in the splendor of his name. The last idea is related to the truth that because of the presence of God in its midst, Jerusalem will become an attraction for the nations of the earth.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel, as it describes the trip of the magi to Bethlehem to see the infant Jesus. First of all, the Gospel starts with the trip of the magi to Jerusalem in search for Jesus with the intention of adoring him. Then, the Gospel describes the anxiety of King Herod at the hearing of that news and his effort to inquire about the exact place the Christ was to be born.

The Gospel talks also about the duplicity of Herod who, though he ascertained about the exact time of the apparition of the star and led the magi to go to Bethlehem, did not have a real intention of adoring Jesus.

After that, the Gospel speaks of the second apparition of the star and the arriving of the magi to the place where Jesus was with his mother Mary. The Gospel finishes with the account of the offerings of the magi to the new born Baby and their return to their country by another way.

What do we learn from today's Gospel? Today I want to talk about the importance of discovering the signs of the presence of God in our life. In fact, one of the striking things in today's Gospel is the fact that, by observing the stars of the sky, the magi came to discover one that had a special message to the point that they set out to go to Bethlehem in order to find the newborn king of the Jews.

And yet, many in their land had seen the same stars, but they did not come to discover any differences among them. For them, everything was as ordinary as it was since the foundation of the world. But, for the Magi, something new had happened that was worth a trip. How do we explain such a difference of attitude?

In fact, the main reason why the magi came to decipher the message in the star is that they were open to the reality of God. They were in search of his presence. If we are not attentive to the signs of the presence of God in our life, we can easily pass beside an event in which God talks to us. It is like escaping death at the occasion of an accident on the highway. A non-believer would easily say that he was lucky enough to get out of

it without damage. But a man of faith would say that the hand of God was with him and he spared his life.

To learn to recognize the signs of the presence of God in our life is the challenge we face today, because it is vital to the growth of our faith. If we really pay attention to the signs of the presence of God in our life, we will realize that it is not at random that we exist, but for a purpose that God had in his plan for us since the foundation of the world. Only this way can help us understand that God speaks to us through the events happening in our life. In that sense, there is no chance, but everything is God's providence, grace and magnanimity.

Does it mean that the signs of the presence of God in our life are clear and evident at all times? No. For instance, the star bore a message for the magi; but it disappeared too without them having come to the goal of their trip, namely the finding of Jesus. That is a sign that everything in our search for Jesus, or the understanding of the message he is sending us, is not clear and evident.

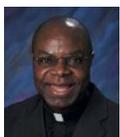
In fact, faith is a long journey made up of success and failure, light and darkness, conviction and doubt, etc. As such, faith has its moments of darkness and brightness, ups and downs. If that is the case, what matters most is not that at times, it might be difficult to believe because of some problems we have, but the courage to persevere in time of clouds and darkness. When such moments happen in our life, we need the courage to be humble and ask for help.

That is what the magi had done. As long as the star was bright and leading them, they kept going. Once the star disappeared and the whole project seemed to be doomed to failure, they asked for help. If we really need to be God's people and grow in faith, there is no other way we have to go through than that of the magi.

In time of light and blessing, we need to be thankful to God. In time of darkness and distress in our life, we need to have the courage to ask for assistance so that we find our way again. If we do not act that way, we will lose everything.

Let us, then, ask of the Lord the grace of perseverance when things become tough in our life. Let us ask of him the grace of his Spirit so that we come to discern the signs of his presence in our life and in the world. May God bless you all!

Isaiah 60: 1-6; Ephesians 3: 2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2: 1-12



Homily Date: January 03, 2016
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Contact: www.mbala.org
Document Name: 20160103homily.pdf