

Solemnity of Epiphany of the Lord A/2019

The readings of this solemnity of the Epiphany talk about the manifestation of Jesus to the world. They highlight the universality of God by showing that he belongs to all the nations of the earth and not only to the people of Israel. They invite us to join the magi and adore Jesus as our savior.

The first reading describes the universality of God from the background of Israel's history of liberation from exile. It shows that Jerusalem will become a light to the nations and a shining power to the kings of the earth. It shows equally that the wealth of the nations and the riches of the people will be brought to Jerusalem in order to praise God. Finally, the text highlights the fact that, while foreigners and Jews alike will come to Jerusalem, the glory of God will shine upon the city.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is not exclusive of some people, but is open to anyone who invokes his name. Another idea is that the election of Israel aimed at serving as an example to all the people of the earth. The last idea is related to the truth that God enlightens the people of the earth so that they come to know him.

This text allows us to understand the stakes of today's Gospel as it talks about the trip of magi to Jerusalem in search for Jesus. First of all, the Gospel states that the magi, who were following a star at the birth of Jesus, came to Jerusalem seeking for him in order to do him homage.

Then, it shows how Herod and the whole inhabitants of Jerusalem were troubled at the hearing of the news of the birth of the baby King. It also shows what Herod did in inquiring over the prophecies from priests and scribes and the recommendations he gave to the magi.

After that, the Gospel shows how the star reappeared to the magi once they left the king Herod. It also shows how it led them to the manger where the baby Jesus was with his parents. Finally, the Gospel shows how the magi were happy in finding Jesus, how they offered him their gifts and returned home by taking another road according to the recommendations given to them by an angel in a dream.

What do we learn from this Gospel? Today I want to talk about the universality of God. In fact, in the creed we recite every Sunday, we say that "I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church". "Catholic" means universal, of all the people and of all the nations.

In that perspective, the God in whom we believe is not exclusive, but open to all the people and all the nations of the earth. He is not limited by the language people speak or the color of their skin so that we may say that God is black, white, green, yellow, red or purple. He is just God.

For that reason, God comes to the encounter of anyone who seeks him in truth. He desires in his heart to establish a relationship with anyone of every nation or people who is open to him. He welcomes indistinctly anyone of those who look for him in sincerity and in truth.

However, in order for that relationship to happen, one has to recognize the signs of the presence of God in his life and around him. Those signs are different from one person

to another, and according to circumstances of life. Only those who are attentive to the signs of his presence, like the magi, can encounter him.

In order to better understand what I am saying here, let me give you an example. Suppose that there is a car accident from which people have survived the crash. Among those who escaped the accident, there are believers and nonbelievers, etc. Though all those people were involved in a same accident, their reaction, however, will not be same. For instance, an atheist will simply say that he was lucky enough to escape death. A believer, on the contrary, will say that God was merciful enough with him to the point of protecting him from death.

This example gives us a clue about the interpretation of the signs of God's presence. In fact, people can be so self-centered and prideful that they pretend to know everything about God from the books, like Herod, the priests and the scribes, but without any desire of establishing a relationship with him.

Though such people might know a lot about God, such knowledge, however, is just intellectual. It does not engage their heart so that they give their life to God. That is why, in spite of their knowledge, they never discover God and know him in truth.

Some other people, on the contrary, desire deeply in their hearts to know God. They want to establish a relationship with Him. To such people, God will never hide his face. Perhaps, life might be tough to them, but whatever might be the length of their search and all the obstacles in their way, God will open up to them.

That is exactly what happened to the magi. Their perseverance had paid because, though the star they were following disappeared, they did not abandon their search. In the end, they found the star again and eventually found Jesus. That is why we have to understand that whatever might be the hardships we can have in our faith or the doubts which rise because of the difficulties of life, if we do not drop our arms, a moment will come, when God will console us.

In that sense, we understand that faith is not an easy business. It certainly has its moments of darkness and brightness. What is important, however, is the perseverance we all need to have when it is dark. That is what the magi have done. When the star disappeared, they asked for help. And when the star reappeared, they continued their journey.

We need to react like them: in time of light and peace to be thankful to God. In time of darkness and doubt, let us have the courage of asking for help in order to find our way again. In the uncertainty of life, may God help us find the way to him! May God bless you all!

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



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