

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord B2024

We are created by God to belong together, to live in relationship with one another and to gather as members of one family, the family of God. It is for that reason that God sent Jesus into the world to be our savior and redeemer. By his teaching, deeds and action, Jesus has shown us in many ways that God, his Father, is inclusive and open to all his creatures. Jesus has manifested the universality of God by dying on the cross for all the peoples of the earth.

The Solemnity of Epiphany reminds us that because we are one family, God is our Father and all of us are brothers and sisters, in spite of our diversity. The privilege given to one is for the benefit of others and the blessing given to some is for the sake of all.

Two witnesses come out of today's readings, confirming that our God is universal. The first witness is of the prophet Isaiah who speaks of the choice of Israel as a light shining in the universe. Because of that light, nations and Kings of the earth will walk toward the splendor of Jerusalem. Riches of the sea and the wealth of nations, gold and frankincense, caravans of camels and dromedaries from Midian, will come to Jerusalem proclaiming the praises of God. Given that all the people of the earth belong to God, none is excluded from his presence. God is open to anyone who looks for him with a sincere heart.

The second witness is that of St Paul who considers his ministry as a stewardship God gave him for the benefit of Gentiles, that is, pagans. Normally pagans were people foreigner to Israel, those who did not have the same blood or the same heritage with them. For that reason, they were excluded from eternal salvation. But, now St Paul says that, God in his secret plan - he calls mystery - has revealed to him, as well as to the apostles and the prophets, that they too have become members of the same body, coheirs and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.

When the magi came to Jerusalem in search of Jesus to offer him their offerings, they were confirming the truth proclaimed already by Isaiah and supported by Paul about the universality of God who excludes none of those who look for him. By doing so, they were showing that through Jesus God has opened his doors to all the nations of the earth so that whoever looks for him may find him and come to eternal salvation.

The Magi were skilled people of their time. They were learned, knowledgeable and capable of reading the phenomena of nature by finding their meaning for every day life. By reading the stars they realized that one of them was sending a message that a New King was born. They localized the place as Jerusalem and set out to find Jesus.

In sign of homage to him, they brought with them their gifts: gold to honor his kingship and dominion, frankincense to acknowledge his divine being; and myrrh to be used for the ointment at the occasion of burial. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh were those days, in the Eastern world, valuable treasures in the life and times of people who lived there.

The news of the birth of a new King troubled Herod and his entourage. While the magi were enthusiastic about what God was about to do for the world, Herod and the High Priests and Scribes of the people were afraid. They saw the coming of Jesus as a threat and a challenge to their power. And yet, that was not God's intent by sending Jesus into the world or what the Magi perceived.

The Solemnity of Epiphany contains many points of teaching that enlighten our faith and our understanding of God. At the collective level, no nation of the earth is rejected by God and none of the people of the earth is excluded in his presence. In the same way, all the nations of the earth have the same right and privilege before him; they are all called to salvation.

At the individual level, each person is important before God and loved by him. Whatever might be his background, his past or his present situation, his size or the color of his skin, he enjoys the same privilege of being the child of God.

Such a vision sheds light on the call of Israel as a nation. In fact, Israel was never chosen for its own sake, but rather in order to serve as light to other nations. In other words, Israel is a model in the sense that God chose them in order to give an example to other people so that they come to understand that God is good, benevolent, merciful, forgiving, loving, liberator, etc.

This character of example of Israel sheds light on our own vocation. We are never called for our own sake, but always beyond our own call, for the good of others. We just serve as God's instruments for the salvation of our brothers and sisters. When we have gifts and talents, God knows why he has given them to us and not to someone else, namely that we become the channel he uses in order to touch the lives of many. In that sense, the personal vocation transcends the limits of the individual and points to the multitude because, beyond our personal vocation, God wants to reach out to many.

Because God is open to all the nations and all the people, he comes to our encounter and wants to get in touch with us. But, we have to recognize the signs of his presence. Those signs are different from one person to another, and according to the circumstances of life. Only those who are attentive to God's signs, like the Magi, can find him.

To recognize the signs of the presence of God, the dispositions of heart are very important. Some people can be so negative and self-centered that they pretend to know everything about God. Like Herod, his priests and his scribes, however, they have no intention of establishing a relationship with him. In spite of their knowledge, they cannot discover God. Other people are like the Magi: they burn with the desire to know God and meet him. Even when things become difficult, they do not give up; instead they ask for help and persevere until the star appears again.

Let us pray, Brothers and Sisters that the Lord may help us understand that we are his instruments he can use in order to reach out to others. Let us ask him the courage of perseverance so that, like the Magi, we end up finding him in spite of difficulties and doubts on our journey. May God bless you all!

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



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