

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord C2025

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany of our Lord. The word 'epiphany' means "showing forth". Hence, the feast of Epiphany is about the manifestation of the divinity of our Lord Jesus to the nations of the earth represented by the magi. It focuses on the universality of God as savior of the whole world and not only of Israel alone.

Who were the magi? The magi were the learned people of their time. They were scholars and wise, star-gazers and instructed men about the phenomena of nature and the sky. They were capable of penetrating beyond the appearances of things in order to find their hidden meaning.

By observing the sky they found a star that was bearer of a particular message. That is what provoked their trip to Bethlehem in order to find the king of Israel whose birth was announced in the star of the sky.

For that journey, they prepare their gifts to offer the newborn King: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold is the symbol of royal independence and wealth; the incense was used in the royal court for its fragrant smell in honor of the King and the myrrh as the perfumed oil to embalm the body at the burial. The whole mystery of our Lord's life is represented in the gifts of Magi as the savior of world, worthy of praise and who will die for the salvation of mankind.

One of the striking things in today's Gospel is 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 people in their land had seen the same stars, but they did not come to discover any difference 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?

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 a car 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 as he spared his life.

To learn to recognize the signs of the presence of God in our life is the challenge we face today; 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. There is no chance; 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 and find our Lord Jesus. That is a sign that everything in our search for our Lord, or the understanding of the message he is sending us, is not clear and evident.

The trip of the Magi is the symbol of human faith. Faith is a long journey made up of success and failure, light and darkness, conviction and doubt, etc. Faith has its moments of darkness and brightness, ups and downs. What matters is not that at times, it might be difficult to believe because of some problems we might have. What counts, on the contrary, is 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, 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.

The Gospel says when the Magi found the Lord, they offered him their gifts. Like the Magi each one of us is called to offer to the Lord the best of his gifts. It is, perhaps, easy to offer him our 'gold', that is our money and our material possessions. However, what our Lord needs, beyond our material things, is ourselves. The perfumed oil that was used for burial that the Magi offered reminds us of our human frailty and weakness. This also is part of who we are and it is not a barrier to our coming to him. Our Lord welcomes our myrrh as he welcomes our gold. The frankincense symbolizes the fervent prayer, which lifts all that we are and all that we have up to God.

As we watch the baby Jesus welcome the Magi and their gifts, let us be aware that our Lord embraces us, too, and all we love and all that is good in us. Let us ask him the grace of perseverance when things become tough in our life. Let us ask him the grace of his Spirit so that we come to discern the signs of his presence in our life and in the world. Amen!

Isiah 60: 1-6; Ephesians 3: 2-3a, 5-6; Mathew 2: 1-12



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