

January 07 The Epiphany of the Lord

The Greek word Epiphany, means appearance or manifestation. Multiple revelations of Jesus as God are celebrated on this Feast of the Epiphany. First, the angels revealed Jesus to the shepherds. In the Western Church, the Feast of the Epiphany celebrates Jesus' first appearance to the Gentiles, represented by the Magi, while in the Eastern Church, the Epiphany event is celebrated in the commemoration of the Baptism of Christ when the Father and the Holy Spirit gave combined testimony to Jesus' identity as Son of God. Later, in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus revealed Himself as the promised Messiah, and at Cana Jesus revealed His Divinity by transforming water into wine. The Church celebrates all these epiphany events on this Feast of Epiphany.

Today's Gospel teaches us how Christ enriches those who bring him their hearts. The adoration of the Magi fulfills the oracle of Isaiah (first reading), prophesying that the nations of the world would travel to the Holy City following a brilliant light and would bring gold and incense to contribute to the worship of God. Today's Responsorial Psalm (Ps 72) includes a verse about kings coming from foreign lands to pay homage to a just king in Israel. Paul's letter to the Church of Ephesus (today's second reading), expresses God's secret plan in clear terms: "the Gentiles are...copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel." Today's Gospel reminds us that if God permitted the Magi – foreigners and pagans – to recognize and give Jesus proper respect as the King of Jews, we should know that there is nothing in our sinful lives that will keep God from bringing us to Jesus. There were three groups of people who reacted to the Epiphany of Christ's birth. The first group, headed by King Herod the Great, tried to eliminate the Child, the second group, priests and scribes, ignored him, and the third group, represented by the shepherds and the Magi, came to adore him.

(1) Let us make sure that we belong to the third group. a) Let us worship Jesus at Mass, every day if we can, with the gold of our love, the myrrh of our humility and the frankincense of our adoration. Let us offer God our very selves, promising Him that we will use His blessings to do good for our fellow men. b) Let us plot a better course for our lives as the Magi did, choosing for ourselves a better way of life in the New Year by abstaining from proud and impure thoughts, evil habits, and selfish behavior, sharing our love with others in acts of charity. c) Let us

become stars, leading others to Jesus, as the star led the Magi to Him. We can remove or lessen the darkness of the evil around us by being, if not like stars, at least like candles, radiating Jesus' love by selfless service, unconditional forgiveness and compassionate care.

(2) Like the Magi, let us offer Jesus God's gifts to us on this feast of Epiphany. (a) The first gift might be friendship with God. After all, the whole point of Christmas is that God's Son became one of us to redeem us and call us friends. God wants our friendship in the form of wholehearted love and devotion. (b) A second gift might be friendship with others. This kind of friendship can be costly. The price it exacts is vulnerability and openness to others. The Good News, however, is that, in offering friendship to others, we will receive back many blessings. (c) A third gift might be the gift of reconciliation. This gift repairs damaged relationships. It requires honesty, humility, understanding, forgiveness and patience. (d) The fourth gift of this season is the gift of peace: seeking God's Peace in our own lives through prayer, the Sacramental life, and daily meditation on the Word of God.

It is out of humble gratitude that we give Him from the heart our gifts of worship, prayer, singing, possessions, talents and time. As we give our insignificant, little gifts to God, the Good News is that God accepts them! Like the Magi offering their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, we offer what we have, from the heart, in response to what that Child has given to us - Himself.