

Feast (SJ&QA) of the Epiphany 2021

At Christmas Jesus is revealed to the shepherds. On the Feast of Epiphany Jesus is revealed to the whole world. Today's Gospel is one of the most colorful gospels during the Christmas season. It drives home a very important point, which is expressed in today's second reading, "*that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*" Did you know that what used to be called "*Feast of the Three Kings*" in our liturgical calendar is now the feast of "*Epiphany*"? *Why the change? Were the "Three Kings" dethroned or demoted?* Matthew, the only evangelist who recounted the story of these personages *calls them Magi not kings. And who were the magi?* They were expert in astrology. They studied the stars and they figured that this particular star from the East was special. This star was the sign of the birth of someone great, who will be the King of the Jews. *Why are they wise?* Because they know what to look for. Their question: *Where is the baby born to be the King of the Jews?*' For Matthew, the magi represent foreigners and outsiders who come to know the God of Israel through Jesus the Messiah.

Many parts of the world see in the *Epiphany a feast as significant as Christmas*. In the *Eastern Catholic Rites* and in some parts of Europe today is the traditional day for Gift-giving in remembrance of the gifts offered to the Infant Jesus by the three kings. *In Germany* the feast of the three kings is a time of great rejoicing. *In Latin countries* men dressed as

the three kings are as common as Santa Claus elsewhere. Parents take pictures of their children sitting in the laps of the kings. There are balloons and fireworks instead of elves and reindeer. The *three kings*, not *Santa Claus*, bring the presents; and in church the magi process to the manger along with all the people carrying lighted candles. With its close association with the nativity Epiphany is at times called '*little Christmas*' because it continues the revelation of Jesus who is God made man. This feast in some Christian traditions is gift-giving time & officially ends the Christmas Season. If you haven't sent your gifts, today is the best time. The gifts of the magi would be related to different aspects of Jesus: gold represents him as king, frankincense as God, and myrrh as Suffering Redeemer. Later there developed symbolism relating the gifts to Christian response: gold for virtue, frankincense for prayer & myrrh for suffering.

Life is a journey in search of meaning and fulfillment. Today's feast invites us to join the magi in their journey towards the child Jesus who alone gives meaning to our lives. Both King Herod and the magi want to find the newborn king of the Jews. Herod could have become the famous fourth king – but for all the wrong reasons. Fortunately for us all, his mistake was that he did not personally go out and search for the Messiah. He delegated the three to go and search for the Baby Jesus with the instruction that they come back and report to him. But while the Magi desire to pay homage to the newborn king, Herod wants the death of the

baby. No one can search for God for you! *The search for God is something personal and non-transferable!* We cannot delegate our religious duties and obligations to others. Neither can we blame others if we don't have God in our life. We need to be on our feet like the magi. We need a star to guide us—no longer the star of Bethlehem but the light of faith. We need to search the scriptures for they lead us to Christ. As St. Jerome said, *“Ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ”*. We need humility and perseverance—for the journey is long and hard, and at times the light is hidden from us.

Be grateful, learn to look back, let us remember and acknowledge people who have been our guiding star and have led us through all these years. These are people who really inspire and encourage us to keep on going. *How did the Magi know the Lord?* Though they are full of wisdom and power they learn to humble themselves. They used their wisdom, power & wealth to search for the highest good. It is their faith that moved them to seek the truth. It is their *faith-seeking knowledge* that made them open to the brightness of that star to guide them. *They did not let their brightness and brilliance outshine the brightness and brilliance of the guiding star.* Trouble comes when we begin to think we are the source of light and forget that we are just reflectors of the light. *Trouble multiplies when we start to think that we are stars—unreachable, indispensable, and immovable.*

Lastly, today's feast reminds us that God will reveal Himself and promised to help us find what we are looking for. Like the Magi we make some wrong turns, but as long as we search, accept, pray, and live God's message He will usher us back on track and make the star shine for us. Like the Magi let us continue searching for Jesus. Finding him we humbly offer our efforts and gifts, and then go quietly and gently—but proudly—into the night. *We may or may not have the material gifts* - the whole point is that we can come to the Lord whoever we are—AS WE ARE. *No gifts required, just bring your heart. Just give your heart. Amen!*