

6 January – Epiphany A – B – C

First Reading Isaiah 60:1-6

Arise, shine out, for your light has come, the glory of the Lord is rising on you, though night still covers the earth and darkness the peoples. Above you the Lord now rises and above you his glory appears. The nations come to your light and kings to your dawning brightness.

Lift up your eyes and look round: all are assembling and coming towards you, your sons from far away and your daughters being tenderly carried. At this sight you will grow radiant, your heart throbbing and full, since the riches of the sea will flow to you, the wealth of the nations come to you; camels in throngs will cover you, and dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; everyone in Sheba will come, bringing gold and incense and singing the praise of the Lord.

Second Reading Ephesians 3:2-3a.5-6

You have probably heard how I have been entrusted by God with the grace he meant for you, and that it was by a revelation that I was given the knowledge of the mystery.

This mystery that has now been revealed through the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets was unknown to any men in past generations; it means that pagans now share the same inheritance, that they are parts of the same body, and that the same promise has been made to them, in Christ Jesus, through the gospel.

Gospel Matthew 2:1-12

After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of King Herod, some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east. "Where is the infant king of the Jews!" they asked. "We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this he was perturbed, and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, and enquired of them where the Christ was to be born. "At Bethlehem in Judaea," they told him "for this is what the prophet wrote: And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are by no means least among the leaders of Judah, for out of you will come a leader who will shepherd my people Israel." Then Herod summoned the wise men to see him privately.

He asked them the exact date on which the star had appeared, and sent them on to Bethlehem.

"Go and find out all about the child," he said "and when you have found him, let me know, so that I too may go and do him homage." Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out.

And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising; it went forward and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage.

Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

But they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way.

Meditation

The Christmas Season continues with yet another view of God in our history.

In his very flesh, Jesus is the revelation of God. This is a season to celebrate a baby, but even more the manifestation, "epiphany," of God to the whole world. The gospel warms many hearts with the story of the three visitors to Bethlehem. Following the star, they come to offer gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Aided by the first two readings, we can open up the meaning of this vignette. God is present in our history. This is a gift for all. Whether arriving on dromedaries from Midian and Ephah or bearing gold and frankincense from Sheba, whole nations shall walk by this light. In the early Church, this meant that Gentiles would have to be seen as co-heirs with the Jews, members of the same body. Enjoying the memories and mystery of this day should thus be more than thinking about the three kings. It is also far more important than any technical debate about the translation of "magi" (Greek). They have been called kings, wise men, or astrologers.

In any event they signal a day to celebrate God's manifestation in Christ Jesus. When we celebrate Epiphany we face the mystery of Christ's identity and our response in faith. Because this revelation is universal, we are presented with a further challenge. Do we treat some as "outsiders" as if we were not co-heirs?

Do we act as if epiphany were for a few?