

**HOMILY FOR THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD, YEAR C, JAN. 6, 2019 ST. JOSEPH  
THE WORKER PARISH-DUBUQUE  
IS. 60:1-6 / EPH. 3:2-3A, 5-6 / MT. 2:1-12**

**THEME: A JOURNEY OF FAITH: FOLLOWING OF THE STAR**

Where is newborn king of the Jews? We have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him" (Mt. 2:1)

Today we celebrate the Epiphany of our Lord Jesus Christ, God's "showing up in our midst" in the person of Jesus Christ. This day announces that the Son of God came for all people, Jew and Gentile alike. His saving love is available to everyone, everywhere, in whatever state of life they may find themselves. There is no one outside of God's thirst for love.

The 1<sup>st</sup> reading is a promise fulfilled in today's gospel, where gentiles fascinated by the splendor and radiance of Jerusalem shall come with gifts of gold and frankincense and praise with their sons and daughters to adore and worship God. The Psalmist confirms the visit of kings to pay Jesus homage, bring him tribute and gifts (Ps. 72). The 2<sup>nd</sup> reading gives a historical setting for today's feast - gentiles have been made co-heirs, members of the same body and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph. 3:6). The gospel reading is inviting us to ponder on the journey of the Magi - the wise men - to worship the baby Jesus in the manger.

Now let us reflect on the theme: A JOURNEY OF FAITH: FOLLOWING OF THE STAR. I would like to break it into 3 "D's" - Decision, Determination and Discovery.

I. DECISION

The Wise Men were seekers of God (Is. 55:6). They were not afraid of adventure. They left the comfort of the east and searched for Christ. Searching for Jesus was their passion and they were ready to sacrifice their time for it. Their purpose or goal was clearly stated in Luke 2:15: "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about". The magi were aware that the journey wasn't going to be easy. They considered the challenges, what they could take with them and what to leave behind. They made a difficult and uncertain journey to find the king who would change the world. A difficult and uncertain journey is the journey of all of our lives. In that journey, our purpose is to find Jesus Christ, worship him, and participate with him in changing the world.

Moved by the promise of what the magi perceived in the heavens, they left their country behind in search of not merely a star, but THE STAR. Their following of the star is a journey of faith, a constant search for meaning, for purpose, for the things of God. Their search mirrors our own life-long search for compassion, justice, peace and forgiveness. Herod was disturbed by the "star" the magi followed because it recalled Old Testament prophecy about "a star that shall come forth out of Jacob" and the "dispossession of the Edomites", the tribe of Herod (Num. 24:17,18). Note that the star disappeared when they got to Herod's house due to his wickedness. I pray that the illumination of the Star guides our every step and movement this year.

## II. DETERMINATION

The magi had the spirit of perseverance and endurance. Nothing could deter them on that journey, even as they encountered people and events along the way that had the potential to keep them from achieving their goal. They had a conviction that neither the desert, nor the storms, nor the quiet of the oases, the distance, discomfort, or their foreign status could keep them from reaching their destination and attaining their goal. They even risked their lives by stopping for direction from king Herod. Are you ready to leave your comfort zone in order to embrace Christ, to explore new things this year? What goals have you set for your life in 2019? Do you have the strong determination to pursue and achieve your goals without given up? Do we possess the spirit of perseverance and endurance that the magi had to achieve your goals at all cost?

## III. DISCOVERY

In Bethlehem, the magi found the fulfillment of all that they were seeking in their lives. They saw, experienced, discovered and encountered Jesus and they believed. They prostrated themselves, "did him homage" and their lives were undoubtedly changed forever. May the magi be our patrons in prostrating or submitting ourselves before the presence of Jesus. As you kneel at the feet of the child Jesus on the day of his Epiphany and see him a king bearing none of the outward signs of royalty, you can tell him: "Lord, take away my pride; crush my self-love, my desire to affirm myself and impose myself on others. Make the foundation of my personality my identification with you."

After laying themselves at the feet of Jesus the magi gave him the best gifts they could bring. They offered him three gifts, each of these gifts is symbolic. They offered him, not pampers or baby formula, but gold, frankincense and myrrh. In the ancient world, these precious items were standard gifts to honor a king or a deity—gold is a precious metal used by kings signifying royalty, frankincense is incense used in the worship of the Lord and myrrh is a spice used for embalming dead bodies, symbolizing the death and resurrection of Christ. This new year we want to resolve to search for our true king, perfect priest, and supreme Savior. What gifts do you have for the Lord? This not need be material!

After the magi visited Jesus, they are warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and "departed for their country by another way" (Mt 2:12). "When someone is in Christ, he or she becomes a new creation. Behold the old order is gone and Christ has made everything new" (2 Cor. 5:17). An encounter with the true King of the Jews changes us forever. We begin to chat a new path. We might travel back to our country, but it's no longer the familiar home. We might again inhabit old places, but we no longer truly live there. Perhaps we go back to work, to school or to college, but we are different; things are different. The old self is left behind, the new self journeys onward into the new night devoid of darkness. It's important to ask yourself, "What type of journey am I on?" Who or what do I pursue? What am I willing to leave behind, what am I willing to risk to find God? Am I surveying the night sky to gain power, or to survive in a fallen world, or to live forever in eternal communion with God, held securely in his loving embrace? Have you forsaken your old ways of life and embrace Christ? God bless you.