

## **EPIPHANY OF THE LORD, YEAR A: Isaiah 60:1-6, Eph 3:2-3.5-6, Matt 2:1-12**

The word Epiphany from its Greek origin means, “revelation from above” and this explains the visitation of the three Magi or wise men who sought after the shining star they noticed from the East. This Feast was first celebrated in Africa, in Egypt, to replace a pagan feast that celebrated the victory of light over darkness. Today’s Feast, the manifestation of Jesus to the gentile world is like Christmas but with a slight difference. At Christmas we celebrated the birth of the baby Jesus, but at Epiphany we are celebrating the realization that God born in human flesh is not for some people or nation alone.

In our first reading, Isaiah says, “arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.” Isaiah was speaking of the arrival of Christ, the true light that will bring joy and happiness upon the face of the earth. This prophecy gives us enough divine assurance or hope, that no matter what we are going through, even if darkness is so thick that God will shine his light to lighten our ways. His glory will be manifested in our lives. Christians are called upon to participate actively in the light of Christ. He calls us the light of the world and so we are. The prophecy of Isaiah continues to assure us that this manifestation shall gather all around us, because of the radiant splendor of the light of God.

Paul in his letter to the Ephesians also proclaimed the Epiphany of the Lord just as the two other readings did. He says that through God's grace, he has been given the mystery of the revelation of Jesus Christ. This same message was made known by the Holy Spirit to the prophets and the apostles, that is Epiphany. Paul made everyone to understand that the gentiles were not left out. "It has now been revealed that the Gentiles are fellow heirs of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel," Eph 3:6. This mystery is the feast of the Epiphany that the Church celebrates today.

The Gospel presents us the wise men, who were shown the star by God to understand where the newborn king was, but the star disappeared probably because they lose their focus, they were left to take the human methods for such an enquiry, by going to the palace of the king, possibly because kings are born in the palace. Nevertheless, when they turned back to God behold the star [GPS] was waiting for them. God who had brought them thus far would not leave them stranded. Herod who was a man of darkness would not openly own his fears and jealousies for it would be his disgrace to let the wise men know them. He learned of the wise men the time when the star appeared, that he might take his measures accordingly and then employs them to enquire

further, and bids them bring him an account. He was so tricky that he covered everything with the show of religion, "that I may come and worship him also." What a devilish king, that is the tactics of the devil who most often pose as an angel of light. Most wickedness is often concealed under mask of piety. The question here is why on earth, should the birth of a little child disturb a whole king and the entire Jerusalem? The fear of the unknown can lead man into evils. Unknown to Herod, Jesus' kingship was to rule in the hearts of men and women. He was to bring the light of salvation to all, and not to play politics because he is not a partisan. We must beware of Herod's of our time

The three Maggi, who were obviously not Jews, prostrated and worshipped the child as God, but Jews look for a way to kill him. Every time we come before Jesus; we are expected to do exactly what the Maggi did. They brought Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These were revelation of the identity of Jesus as King, Priest and Savior of the world. Jesus had not even started to talk or walk when this happened, yet it is obvious that he is God in human flesh. Dear friend, the birth of Jesus should teach us that God works in mysterious ways. The palace may seem attractive, yet it may not be the plan God has for us. Like Herod, not all those who smile with us mean well for us. In moments of difficulty and anxiety, we should turn to God and wait upon him.

We have wealth in abundance, yet we many of us live poor lives. There is a story about a man: One night, before Christmas, he had a massive quarrel with his wife. His wife started complaining, 'there is no food in the house; Christmas is approaching and there are no clothes for our kids; no money for doing up the house....' And the man expressed his helplessness, 'what am I to do...I don't waste any money... whatever I earn I give it to you... The only problem is that I don't get proper jobs.' 'If you can't afford to look after us, why did you get married and have children...?' The quarrel went on till midnight. He got up and went out of the house. He aimlessly walked. As he walked, he reached a mighty river. He sat on the riverbank. The river flowed with a mighty gush. He sat there quietly. He tried to calm himself. All his woes, he thought to himself, were because of lack of money. If only he had money, his family would be a happy one. As he sat in the darkness in such a melancholy mood, he found a sack of pebbles next to him. He picked up the stones and began playfully throwing them one by one into the mighty river. This went on till the morning. As the sun was rising, he had mentally calmed down, and he had almost emptied the sack of pebbles. He had one last pebble in his hand; just before throwing it into the river, he had one look at it in the bright morning sun, to his great misery and dismay, he discovered that it was a precious stone. "What an unfortunate man I am," he thought to himself, "God had given me such

wealth in my hands. If only I had realized it, all my woes would have gone." This is the paradox in life. We have wealth in abundance, yet we lead poor lives. We have treasures under us, but we live like beggars. The church, like a mother, provides us with such great treasures: the Bible, the Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Confession etc. If only we use them properly, we would be free from many of the ills, which plague us. If we do not take advantage of these, we will be like that man on the bank of the river, throwing away the precious treasures into the bottomless river.