

Epiphany

January 3, 2021

In telling this story of the visit that three foreign kings made to the Christ child St. Matthew probably had today's first reading in mind. In that reading, the prophet Isaiah proclaimed Israel's universal mission of salvation. All nations would be drawn to Israel. Israel would become the guiding light, the doorway, and the path for the salvation of the whole world. "Nations shall walk by your light," Isaiah prophesied. That light and the mission were now focused on the person of Jesus Christ, the light of the world. The three kings are the first outsiders to be drawn into the good news of salvation, and they do so wholeheartedly.

The journey of faith in Christ is at the center of today's Gospel. The three kings teach us four lessons for our own life-long journey of faith. The first lesson is the necessity of perseverance. They didn't give up, and neither should we. Maybe they were confused or disappointed when they were led to an ordinary family at home instead of a palace. Still, they trusted that they had been guided to the right place, and so they stayed. Their second lesson to us is to trust where God leads us in life. Sometimes we need to patiently remain focused and stay put. God may want to reveal Himself to us in ways that may seem unlikely to us.

The Kings then offered gifts to Christ, and this is their third lesson. Whenever we feel disappointed by the life, we're tempted to short-change our family, our work, and even the needs of our souls. Our attitude can become: "What's the use?" but this only makes matters worse. The three kings invested deeply in the moment of the encounter. We should offer our best to God and each other.

The last lesson that the three kings teach us is to be willing to change direction in life once we have encountered the holy presence of Christ. Fearing Herod and warned by God in a dream, the kings went home by another way. It was a smart move. Even a little change can make a big difference in helping us to find the peace and healing of Christ. As someone once said: "Blessed are those who are flexible, for they won't get bent out of shape."

The Epiphany tells us that God can, in fact, be found, can be known and experienced in the person of Jesus Christ. May the light of Christ bring us the peace, healing, and joy of salvation by our God.

Fr. Valentine

Scripture Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/010321.cfm>