

Epiphany

Today we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany, which means we are celebrating the manifestation of the Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, and Savior of the world. Along with the adoration of the Three Wisemen, we also remember Jesus' baptism, and the wedding feast at Cana. All three were manifestations of Christ before He began His public ministry.

The Three Wisemen are emphasized this day, so let us look at what we can learn from them. And we can learn from them because they are venerated as saints in the church. Among other things, I think we can learn three virtues from them: vigilance, fortitude, and faith.

By vigilance, we are to mean the virtue that helps keep one spiritually alert. Vigilance enables us to always be on our guard, both to see when Christ comes to us, and also to see when evil, temptation, and sin is near us.

In the Gospel they saw the star of the newborn king rise and travelled to Jerusalem to do him homage. Their vigilance allowed them to see the star and to recognize its significance. It was they, Gentiles, who saw the star and knew its deeper meaning, that the King of the Jews has been born, and not the priests and scribes of Jerusalem. The vigilance of the Three Wisemen, which they practiced everyday, caused them recognize the star, but more importantly, to recognize the stirring of Christ in their hearts.

The opposite of vigilance would be sloth, whereby we are not spiritually active due to laziness and desire for comfort, not wanting to exert spiritually energy. Sloth makes us unable to see Christ in our lives, and it also makes us vulnerable to evil, sin, and giving in to temptation. Being saints in the Church, pray to the Three Wisemen and ask for their intercession if you find yourself in a slothful rut. Also, pray to them to be more vigilant in your spiritual life.

The Three Wisemen show us what fortitude looks like. By fortitude, we mean that virtue which keeps us focused on Christ during periods of trial, suffering, and difficulties in prayer. Their journey to see this new king was by no means an easy one. I'm sure that they encountered some form of resistance on this pilgrimage, but their fortitude helped to push through it and reach their journey's end. All of us are on a journey here on earth. We are journeying in this life towards our true heavenly homeland that we'll hopefully reach in the next.

The opposite of fortitude would be cowardice. By cowardice we mean shying away from our crosses, or being scared of being witnesses for Christ in certain situations. We cannot escape the Cross this side of Heaven. In fact, the path that leads us all of us to Heaven goes through the Cross. This should not surprise us because Christ tells us in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, that if we want to follow after Him, then we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him (Matt. 16:24; Mk. 8:34; Lk. 9:23). We should never think that because

there is a cross in our life, then it must mean that God hates us or that He's punishing us.

On the contrary, it means that God loves us. Our Father in Heaven sends us crosses because He loves us and wants us to enjoy eternal life with Him in Heaven. The only way to reach our final destination is through the cross, so we really should be joyful when we are enduring the cross. The Three Wisemen can intercede for us when we lack the energy or motivation in picking up our cross.

Lastly, the Three Wisemen teach us the virtue of faith. What ultimately led them to go on their journey was faith in Christ. Their openness to the transcendent, their openness to God, allowed for seeds of faith to be planted in their hearts. Did they know what they would find? Probably not, but what they did find exceeded far beyond what they expected. And what they received was more valuable than the costly gifts they gave, gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh that they gave to the newborn King. What they received was the priceless gift of faith in Christ.

The opposite of faith is doubt. From time to time we can have doubts. Whether we doubt God's existence, the mission of Christ, or Church teaching, our faith can get tested from time to time. The Three Wisemen may have questioned why they left their homes along the way, but they continued anyway. May the Three Wisemen help to illuminate your faith during these times of doubt. They were pagans who witnessed Christ to the world. If these pagans did not doubt Christ, nor His existence in the world, then neither should we.

So let us today be thankful for the Three Wisemen who teach us how to journey well in this life as they did, especially in living out these virtues of vigilance, fortitude, and faith. When spiritually tempted, let us look to the virtues and to those who can also intercede for us to help us. We cannot do the Christian thing on our own, nor were we made to. We need the Church and the community She provides to keep us focused on Christ. She also helps to protect those who are on the right path as well.

As we thank God today for taking on our humanity and revealing Himself to us on this Feast of the Epiphany, let us recommit our faith and our love to Christ as we strive to be His good and faithful servants.

We might not have gold, frankincense, or myrrh, so let us give Him the priceless gift that we all possess. Let us give Jesus our lives and live for Him.