

The Epiphany of the Lord

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage" (Matthew 2:1-12).

From the Gospel of Matthew, we hear this remarkable story of the Wise Men who observe his star and overwhelmed with joy, set out to encounter Jesus for the first time. Like the Wise Men, the Feast of the Epiphany awakens in us a glow from the celebrations of Christmas; of our encounters with the Christ Jesus who brings good news to the afflicted; binds the brokenhearted; proclaims liberty to captives; freedom to prisoners; peace to nations; and light to the darkness.

As we approach this New Year, each day will give us an opportunity to celebrate life, to share love, to enkindle hope. It will provide new occasions for service to others, for compassion and understanding, for listening and learning. Each day will bring a challenge to each of us; to take what we have experienced, what we have been gifted, and to intentionally work to complete His mission: to re-create the face of the earth into a world where all human life is defended, where the poor and outcast are welcome, where the hungry are fed, where the naked are clothed, where the sick and suffering are healed, and where all can come to know God's unconditional love and forgiveness.

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me'" (Matthew 25. 31-40).

Just as we were called to sing out for joy with the Christmas angels, so too, are we called to be, in our own time, His magi, and His star.

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