

Sunday, January 5, 2020

The Epiphany of the Lord

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6

2nd Reading: Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6

Responsorial: Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

Epiphany, A Time to See the Lord in a New and Deeper Way

They saw the child. (Matthew 2:11)

An epiphany is a sudden realization about the nature or meaning of something. The birth of a child can be an epiphany that suddenly makes us understand love and responsibility in a new way. A doctor's warning about health issues can be an epiphany that causes us to change the way we eat. And a Scripture passage, homily, or spiritual book can be an epiphany that helps us see Jesus in an unexpected, new way.

The Greek word epiphania means "manifestation." Today, on Epiphany Sunday, we celebrate how God manifested his glory to the Magi. First, they saw a star and chose to follow it all the way to Jesus. Second, when they found Jesus, the Magi knelt down to worship him and pay him homage. Third, the Magi went home changed.

This pattern can be the same for your life. God visits the earth on a daily basis. You might say he never left! Every day he stands at the door of your heart and asks, "Can I come in?" (Revelation 3:20). The Magi didn't have to follow the star. They chose to follow the star. You have the same choice to open the door to God.

When the Magi saw Jesus' divinity, they worshipped him. Today, while you are at Mass, let the divinity of Christ move you to worship. Contemplate who Jesus is and all that he has done for you. Kneel before him—baby in a manger or Savior on a cross—and let joy and gratitude fill you, just as the Magi experienced.

Finally, the Magi were changed by what they saw. We know they changed routes to avoid Herod. But even more, imagine how hard it was for them to go home and return to "normal." They had seen the glory of God, and nothing would be the same again!

Your life can be changed by this very pattern: seeing and worshipping Jesus and receiving a new insight from the Spirit will always improve the way you think, act, and relate to other people.

"Lord, I ask you for an epiphany today. Jesus, help me see you anew."

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. The first reading opens with these words: *Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the LORD shines, and over you appears his glory. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you: your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses. Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow.*
 - Do the opening words of the reading fill you with hope as you contemplate what God has accomplished in the coming of Jesus? In what ways?
 - What are some areas of your life that may need an increase in faith and hope?
 - What are some steps you can take in 2020 to help increase your faith and hope in those areas?
2. The responsorial psalm begins as follows: *O God, with your judgment endow the king, and with your justice, the king's son; He shall govern your people with justice and your afflicted ones with judgment. Justice shall flower in his days, and profound peace, till the moon be no more. May he rule from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. ... All kings shall pay him homage, all nations shall serve him.* It ends with these words: *For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out, and the afflicted when he has no one to help him. He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor; the lives of the poor he shall save.*
 - How has Jesus fulfilled these prophetic words? What prophetic words of this psalm remain to be fulfilled?
 - In 2020, what are some new steps you can take to share in the work of Jesus, as described in the ending words?
3. In the second reading, we hear this wonderful revelation: *You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for your benefit, namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation. It was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*
 - What does this revelation mean to you, especially that *the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel*?
 - How can we as Christians be a better witness of Christ's love to our Jewish brothers and sisters?
 - Have you ever prayed for Jewish people whom you know, and for all the Jewish people, that they may one day come to know Jesus as their Messiah and Lord? Are you willing to do that on a regular basis? If not, why not?
4. The Gospel reading provides the very contrasting reactions of King Herod and the magi to the birth of our Lord: *When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ... They (the magi) were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage.*
 - Why do you think King Herod was so troubled by the news of the *newborn king of the Jews*?
 - Why do you think the magi's reaction was so different than Herod's?
 - What is your reaction when you reflect on these events in the Gospel reading? What are some new ways in 2020 that you can do *homage* to the Lord?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the Epiphany of the Lord described in the Gospel reading. It ends with these words: "When the Magi saw Jesus' divinity, they worshipped him. Today, while you are at Mass, let the divinity of Christ move you to worship. Contemplate who Jesus is and all that he has done for you. Kneel before him—baby in a manger or Savior on a cross—and let joy and gratitude fill you, just as the Magi experienced. Finally, the Magi were changed by what they saw. ... Your life can be changed by this very pattern: seeing and worshipping Jesus and receiving a new insight from the Spirit will always improve the way you think, act, and relate to other people."
 - The meditation describes how we, like the Magi, can be changed by "seeing and worshipping Jesus and receiving a new insight from the Spirit"? Do you believe it will "always improve the way you think, act, and relate to other people"? In what ways?
 - How can you put these words into practice at mass, and in your times of prayer and Scripture reading?

Take some time now to pray for the grace to see and worship the Lord in a new way during this grace-filled Christmas season. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

"Lord, I ask you for an epiphany today. Jesus, help me see you anew."