

## 2019 THE EPIPHANY

Jesus is the Word of God. His teachings when properly pondered will fully satisfy our thirst for truth. The way of living that He presents to us harmonises with our deepest human yearnings. His teachings answer our most probing questions and satisfy our most fundamental needs. His words are equally relevant to people of every age and every situation.

The Magi- an African, an Asian and a Caucasian- symbolise those people of all cultures and races who come to Jesus seeking truth. St Paul makes it ever-so clear in today's 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: "Pagans now share the same inheritance as we Jews. They are part of the same Body. The same promise has been made to them in Christ Jesus through the Gospel."

The relentless trudge of the Magi under blazing desert suns and through dark cold nights is an eloquent symbol of the journey every person in the world must make to satisfy their thirst for truth. The Magi were drawn irresistibly to Bethlehem- to Christ- to drink of the well-spring of truth.

The pagan magi entering the home of Joseph and Mary to worship the new-born Jesus, tells us once and for all that Jesus is not the exclusive property of the People of Israel or, for that matter, of any culture, race or Church. Jesus is the Saviour of all people. Jesus belongs to all mankind. No Church owns Jesus.

Some Catholics have still not forgiven Pope St John Paul II for inviting the leaders of all the major world religions: Buddhists, Hindus, Moslems, Jews, Protestants, Pentecostals and Orthodox to gather at Assisi on October 27<sup>th</sup> 1986 to pray as one for World Peace.

Clearly these angry Catholics do not believe that God speaks to the world through the wisdom of people of all cultures- slowly drawing all people closer to Christ, who is All-Wisdom. They have not internalised the reality that as a Baby- right at the beginning of His life- Jesus was worshipped not only by faithful Jews in the persons of Joseph, Mary and the shepherds but also by pagan magi. The great truth is that God works in the hearts of non-Christians as well as Christians preparing them for that moment when after death, they will behold Christ, the Son of God. And if they are people of goodness they will, instantaneously, believe and worship as did the Magi.

Traditionally the Magi are pictured on camels striding through the desert following a blazing star which lights up the sky.

But if we read the Gospel account carefully we will see that this was not the case. The Magi saw the star as it rose and knew it to be a sign that someone special had been born. And they sought Him. They began their journey. The next time the star is mentioned is when they were on the road to Bethlehem. The implication seems to be that in between these times, they travelled without the star guiding them. They had to ask, to seek and enquire.

We can identify with such a journey. All of us are born with a call that must be answered, a goal to be achieved.

When we start out on what we believe to be our vocation in life, we are often inspired by a bright ideal or hope. But the cold reality is that- as for the Magi- the brightness of the initial star will fade. Clouds will blot out its light- forcing us to feel our way forward in virtual darkness.

Like the Magi we must not be too proud to ask for guidance. Like the Magi we must keep going forward until the darkness passes and we once again glimpse the star that initially beckoned us.

How true this is of our faith journeys. I am sure that all of us at quite an early age were inspired to place Jesus at the heart of our lives.

But inevitably we have met Herods on our journey- people who feigned good will but were intent upon leading us to places where there is only falsehood. Herods may have told us that Jesus is a myth- that Bethlehem is an illusion. Herods may have tempted us to give up on the journey of becoming more and more like Christ, urging us to just focus on self- on acquiring possessions, on seeking endless entertainment, on having an unending good time.

Like the Magi we must turn away from such Herods and continue on our arduous journey to Bethlehem.

But it is not all gloom. For we are not alone. And we are certainly not defenceless. For the Lord Jesus has instituted the Church to give us companionship and protection on our journey.

We come to Mass Sunday after Sunday to be inspired and re-energised by Christ. We also come to be with each other. Like the Magi, we receive strength from being together.

The Magi were men with passionate hearts willing to travel through storms and deserts to come to the well-spring of truth- to Christ. And like the Magi, we have our brothers and sisters in the Church- our fellow- travellers, our fellow seekers- beside us as together we journey to Bethlehem, to meet Christ, the Word of God, our precious Saviour.