

## **Homily The Epiphany of Our Lord - 2008**

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My sisters and brothers in Christ:

We are surprised today to see another group of people looking for the Child Jesus. A few days ago we contemplated the Shepherds going to Bethlehem and today we have the Wise men, 'magi from the East', arriving in Jerusalem and asking, 'Where is the newborn king of the Jews?'

Today with **the Solemnity of the Epiphany** the Church celebrates the 'manifestation' of the newborn Jesus to the whole world.

**Epiphany** means 'manifestation', and in the Wise men are represented all peoples of every language and nation who set out, called by God, to adore Jesus (Cf. In Conv. I.44.1)

There are several symbols in today's feastday that are interesting for us, one of them is the 'manifestation' or 'proclamation' of Jesus as the Messiah. Then, we see people searching for Christ, we also hear about Jesus as the light of the World and then there are the gifts that the Wise men brought to the newborn Baby Jesus.

As we continue to celebrate the Christmas season, we are strongly reminded that we must continue to seek out God's presence in our lives and in our world. Having celebrated Christ's birthday a few days ago, the Church is now asking us to consider how we must still search for Christ. I use the word 'search' here not in the sense that we are searching for something that we have never found. Rather we are continuing to look for a deeper knowledge and experience of the Christ in whom we already believe.

In our own lives, we don't just find God once, and then our search is over. In some ways, we should always be searching for God. As a matter of fact, Christian life is no other thing than looking for Christ and through Him, finding God, the Father and God, the Holy Spirit.

I always remember those words of a Holy Priest, recently canonized, that have been an inspiration for me: "**May you seek Christ. May you find Christ. May you love Christ.** These are three very distinct steps. Have you at least tried to live the first one?" The Way, 382.

Today we should renew our desire to look for Christ with the same determination of the Wise men. Whatever it takes! For them it was a long trip and they had many obstacles to overcome, but they finally arrived to Bethlehem: "They were overjoyed at seen the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother"

Our first two readings proclaim the news that everyone is brought to salvation in Jesus Christ. Through the words of the prophet Isaiah we receive the promise that all nations will come to Jerusalem to receive and honor the **light**. We come to understand this light to be Jesus Christ. "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"

In a few moments we will make our profession of faith. As part of the Creed, we proclaim that Jesus is 'God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God' This Light, that comes to us as a child, will lead us out of darkness. What is the darkness in our world? Darkness is sin. When we fail to fulfill God's law and selfishly prefer ourselves to God.

Let's make our profession of faith a reality in our lives accepting the Light of Christ, rejecting sin and allowing Jesus to be the light that guides our journey. That's exactly what St. Paul tells the Ephesians in today's 2<sup>nd</sup> reading. He calls the Ephesians to accept the plan of God to unite the Jewish people and the Gentiles alike in the salvation which comes through Jesus. No one is excluded: "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"

Today's passage of the Gospel is a well-known story: The wise men trip to Bethlehem and probably the most popular part of it is the fact that they brought gifts for the Child Jesus: "They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh"

They offer the most precious gifts of the East. They offer him **Gold**, a symbol of His divinity. **Frankincense**, symbol of his royalty, the perfume, which was burned each evening on the altar as a symbol of the hope placed in the Messiah. And, **Myrrh**, because God made man, will take upon Himself our weaknesses, and be burdened with our sorrows, and died for us.

For us it is a good time to ask ourselves what is it that we want to give to Jesus. In a sense, it is the end of the Christmas season, even if according to the Liturgical year we still have one more week until the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

What is it that we want to give to Jesus? What can we offer Him for this New Year?

The Liturgy of the Hours on the Feast of the Holy Family, has as the second reading of the Office of readings a homily by Pope Paul VI in Nazareth in 1964. I was reading it and it called my attention

because he said that visiting Nazareth, he learned 3 things.

First, he said: **Silence**

“If only we could once again appreciate its great value. We need this wonderful state of mind...The silence of Nazareth should teach us how to meditate in peace and quiet, to reflect on the deeply spiritual, and to be open to the voice of God’s inner wisdom...”

Second: **Family life**

“May Nazareth serve as a model of what the family should be... a community of love and sharing...”

“The Human Family, a community of peace ... *the first and indispensable teacher of peace* ... The family is the foundation of society for this reason too: *because it enables its members in decisive ways to experience peace*. It follows that the human community cannot do without the service provided by the family” (Pope Benedict XVI, 2008).

Third: **Work**

“...in Nazareth, the home of the craftsman’s son, ... I would especially like to recognize its value –demanding and yet redeeming- and to give it proper respect. I would remind everyone that work has its own dignity. On the other hand, it is not an end in itself... its value ... derives ... from the purpose it serves”

We probably don’t have gold, frankincense and myrrh, but we can try to offer God the **silent love of our hearts**, the effort to make **our families a community of love and sharing** and the desire to **find Him in our daily work**.

What is it that we want to offer Jesus on the feast of the Epiphany?

“We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage...”

May the Star of our Christian vocation be **the permanent guide** of our whole life and may we be **splendid** with the Child Jesus as we

offer our gifts to Him today and always! Amen.