

The Epiphany of the Lord

January 6, 2019

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The word *Epiphany* means manifestation. In this case, the manifestation of the presence of Almighty God. Within Church Tradition, three events in the life of Christ are actually celebrated in connection with the Epiphany: the visit of the Magi, the Baptism in the Jordan, and the Miracle at the wedding feast of Cana. For most of us though, especially when the world has gone back to the “daily grind”, in our ongoing celebration of Christmas, the visit of the Magi from the East is what we associate most closely with Epiphany.

Even though our nativity scenes often incorporate shepherds, animals and kings, the actual event of the Magi’s visit occurred a bit of time after the Lord’s birth. These travelers from the orient must have sacrificed much in order to follow the star. We are told that they brought with them gifts of frankincense, gold and myrrh. Frankincense for the Almighty God, Gold for the Eternal King, and Myrrh as a preparation for his passion and death. They were not sure where the star would lead or how long it would take to find this Newborn King, but they set out with hope and anticipation.

In our own lives, I think this feast day asks us what it is that we are searching for in our lives. It also reminds us that growing in our relationship with the Lord requires sacrifice. We have to give something of ourselves, our substance, if we truly want to enter into a meaningful relationship with the Lord. This can easily be forgotten if we simply focus on the image of the Child in the manger.

Christmas often brings many people to Church that do not come with regularity. Some come for nostalgia, some come because parents or grandparents will be upset if they don’t and perhaps some come because deep down they know that they need to discover what this Newborn King is offering to and for them. We must always offer them the fullness of what the Nativity means. While never eschewing the more sentimental aspects of this great feast, we must also be reminded that the wood of the manger must be never be separated from the wood of the Cross. The Feast of St. Stephen and the Feast of the Holy Innocents that follow immediately after December 25th are good reminders of this.

The light that the Christ child brings into the world, dispels the darkness but does not remove it. Hence, each one of us must examine the darkness in his or her life and allow the light of Christ to transform us. We must allow the light to give us the strength to bring Him our gifts as well, especially the gift of ourselves. Therefore, as we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord, we should ask Him to show us the darkness that remains hidden within each of us and to remove it

by His eternal light. We should also ask Him to give us the courage to give ourselves to His service more fully by laying before Him our very lives in service and charity.

The child in the manger, the child adored by the Magi, the God-Man on the Cross calls us to a deeper awareness of His presence in our lives and in the world. As we celebrate His manifestation to the world, let us rejoice that His light has overcome the darkness and let us be instruments of His light.

An Ancient Epiphany Prayer

The heavens are shining with the clear beauty of the stars, O Lord,
and the very earth is made beautiful by a shining light, because Thou did
vouchsafe to appear to the world from out of Thy holy dwelling place.
Remove, therefore, from our hearts all sadness, for unto this end art Thou come,
that Thou mayest make all things new.
Grant also that light unto our eyes which may purify us and fit us to behold Thee forever;
that thus we who preach to the nations the glad joys of Thy Apparition, may
be glad with Thee in infinite joy. Amen.

From the *Mozarabic Breviary*