

THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

(Matthew 2, 1-12)

The Epiphany is about the manifestation of Jesus, His appearance to the whole world as the Messiah-King. In this manifestation, Jesus is shown as someone who belongs to all, Jews and Gentiles alike. He is not the exclusive “property” of His family or clan or nation. The epiphany of Jesus is at the same time the epiphany of a new world of equals, of a community of brothers and sisters, of walls broken and of bridges restored. All of us belong to Jesus and Jesus belongs to all. This is good news to those whom history and society have dispossessed and have excluded. They have a share in Jesus. Jesus makes them His own. As Jesus appears to us, we behold also the new world He brings.

The gospel of Matthew tells us that while Jesus freely appears through the sign of a star, we must also search for Him. The appearance of Jesus and of the new world He proclaims demands our active involvement, like that of the magi of the gospel account.

What do we learn about the process of the search?

Their search begins with seeing the star a “sign of the times.” A discernment of the meaning of the star follows the seeing. It is not enough to see. It is necessary to understand and to interpret properly. The star points to the birth of a new king of the Jews and Messiah. The searchers approach other people who might know more in order to inquire and learn from them. The searchers are not self-sufficient. They do not have all the answers. They act on the fruits of their discernment and inquiries. A search without action is useless. That action of following the star leads to the newborn king, to the reality the star is pointing to. The astrologers end up with an act of homage, of reverence, of worship.

Our world today badly needs an epiphany of Jesus and of the “new world” He offers. We do not doubt Jesus’ readiness to appear before us. We, however, must ask if we earnestly search for Him and His kingdom. It is quite disturbing to note that many people have been so disillusioned with their lives and their nation that they have stopped searching. Thus many would say, “There is no use searching and dreaming,” “Nothing changes. We do not want to be frustrated again by an unfulfilled expectation.”

It is not enough to search. It also matters to determine what we are searching for. The feast of today offers a lesson in genuine searching. It involves presence to the realities of life, reading the “signs of the times,” proper discernment, reverence for the mystery of life to which our search leads us. The astrologers found the newborn king through this process. It will not fail us now.

In this Eucharist, we meet and receive Jesus for whom the Magi searched and to whom they paid homage and offered gifts. Let us offer Him ourselves and our talents as our gifts to Him. Let us ask Him for the grace to keep us on discovering Him in the people and events that fill our lives. Amen.

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