

Sunday, 6 Jan 2019: The Epiphany of the Lord

First Reading - Is 60:1-6

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

The glory of the Lord shines upon you.

Arise, shine out, Jerusalem, for your light has come,
the glory of the Lord is rising on you,
though night still covers the earth
and darkness the peoples.
Above you the Lord now rises
and above you his glory appears.
The nations come to your light
and kings to your dawning brightness.
Lift up your eyes and look round:
all are assembling and coming towards you,
your sons from far away
and your daughters being tenderly carried.
At this sight you will grow radiant,
your heart throbbing and full;
since the riches of the sea will flow to you;
the wealth of the nations come to you;
camels in throngs will cover you,
and dromedaries of Midian and Ephah;
everyone in Sheba will come,
bringing gold and incense
and singing the praise of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 71:1-2. 7-8. 10-13, R. see v.11

(R.) Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

Second Reading - Eph 3:2-3. 5-6

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians

The revelation means that pagans now share the same inheritance, that they are parts of the same body.

You have probably heard how I have been entrusted by God with the grace he meant for you, and that it was by a revelation that I was given the knowledge of the mystery. This mystery that has now been revealed through the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets was unknown to any men in past generations; it means that pagans now share the same inheritance, that they are parts of the same body, and that the same promise has been made to them, in Christ Jesus, through the gospel.

Gospel Acclamation - Mt 2:2

Alleluia, alleluia!

We have seen his star in the East;

and have come to adore the Lord.

Alleluia!

Gospel - Mt 2:1-12

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

We have come from the East to worship the king.

After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of King Herod, some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east. 'Where is the infant king of the Jews?' they asked. 'We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage.' When King Herod heard this he was perturbed, and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, and enquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 'At Bethlehem in Judaea,' they told him, 'for this is what the prophet wrote:

And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
you are by no means least among the leaders of Judah,
for out of you will come a leader
who will shepherd my people Israel.'

Then Herod summoned the wise men to see him privately. He asked them the exact date on which the star had appeared, and sent them on to Bethlehem. 'Go and find out all about the child,' he said 'and when you have found him, let me know, so that I too may go and do him homage.' Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising; it went forward and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. But they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way.

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Reflection on the Gospel– Feast of the Epiphany Year C (Matthew 2:1-12)

-Veronica Lawson RSM

God's presence is revealed to us in many and diverse ways: we can read the "story" of God's creation of the universe; we can search out the meaning of our dreams; we can learn from our experience and the experience of others; and we can listen to the word of God in our sacred scriptures. Readiness to encounter God in these diverse ways has nothing to do with naïve dependence on our own judgment or on the judgement of others. It has more to do with a way of being in the world that involves openness to the unexpected and a critical and careful communal dialogue between our life experience and our faith tradition. A deep awareness of our place in the Earth community and kinship with the other-than-human teaches us respect for all being and respect for the power of God's Spirit to lead us beyond ourselves.

Epiphany is the feast of the wise ones or astrologers "from the East" who are led beyond themselves and their immediate location by the rising of a star. They form their own preliminary hypothesis and travel west to search out the meaning of this sign. Their enquiries in Jerusalem attract the attention of Herod, the Roman-appointed "king of the Jews" who turns to the official interpreters of the Jewish scriptures for information on the birthplace of the Messiah. The "magi" follow the star that leads them to Bethlehem, to the new born child, the incarnate Wisdom of God. The gospel does not stipulate how many wise ones or magi come to pay homage to the child who has already been named in the text as Emmanuel, God-with-us. There is no indication in the story as to whether they are men or women or both. The three gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh have traditionally been associated with three different characters, usually kings, of different tribes or peoples. These strangers are the first to recognise "God-with-us" in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. They also come to recognise in a dream the duplicity of Herod, who senses a threat to his

political power from the birth of a new-born king of the Jews. They have the good sense not to accede to Herod's request to bring him word of the newborn king. They return home "by another road".

The story-teller Matthew leaves room in the tableau for the insertion of the wise ones who will emerge through the ages. We are invited to enter into Matthew's drama, to be the wise ones, to join with people of different cultures, to engage in our own search for Wisdom, and to follow the star that leads to truth and lasting peace. We are also invited to be wary of those, like Herod, who find their positions threatened by a different sort of power, power based on vulnerability and openness to new life.