

EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

Readings: Isaiah 60: 1-6; Ephesians 3: 2-3, 5-6; Matthew 2: 1-12.

A survey was made among school children asking the question why they enjoyed reading Harry Potter novels and watching Harry Potter movies. The most common answer was, "Because you never know what's going to happen next." The same element of suspense marked the journey of the Magi, who never knew what road the Spirit was going to take them down next. Today's readings invite us to have the curiosity of the Magi.

The word epiphany means a manifestation of God's presence in our midst. The feast of the Epiphany celebrates a manifestation of God's presence in Jesus, not just to the Jewish world, but also to the entire world, both Jews and non-Jews.

Actually, the magi were not kings; they were the advisors to kings. They were scholars who studied the stars and things of that sort. When they saw the new star in the sky, they reasoned that it might signal the birth of some great new king. So they set out to investigate. The rest of the story we all know.

This brings us to our personal response to the feast of the Epiphany. How ought we to respond to it in a practical way in our lives? Perhaps the best way to begin is to say that many people today struggle with their faith. They hunger for some sort of an epiphany or religious experience.

It is in this sense that Jesus intended his followers to **be a kind of epiphany for other people**. He said to his disciples: **"Your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven."** Matthew 5:16

Saint Paul expressed the same idea. Writing to the Christians of Philippi, he said: "You must shine among them like stars lighting up the sky."

More recently Pope John XXIII said, **"every believer must become a spark of light?"**

And so using the imagery of the magi story, **each Christian is called to become a star**. Every Christian is called to be a spark of light amidst the darkness of our world. Every Christian is called to be an "epiphany," pointing the way to Jesus. How do we do this?

How do we become a star or spark of light in the darkness of today's world? The answer is simple, but difficult. We do this by living according to the teachings of Jesus. In other words, we let Jesus, the Light of the World, shine through us by doing his will.

What does this mean in practical terms?

It means that every time we forgive someone who has treated us wrongly, a star lights up the darkness of our world, pointing the way to Jesus. It means that every time we open the door of our heart to the least, the lost, or the lonely, a star lights up the darkness in our world and

points the way to Jesus. It means that every time we treat those about us with gentleness and kindness, a star shines through the darkness and points the way to Jesus. It means that every time we resist the temptation to live by worldly values rather than Christian values, a star shines through the darkness and points the way to Jesus.

This is what the feast of the Epiphany is all about. It's about living according to the teachings of Jesus, and letting the light of Jesus shine through our lives into our world. It's about becoming a star or spark of light in the darkness of our world, so that modern magi may find their way to Jesus.

Little Amy was looking through the family album and found a picture of a man sitting behind a cow. All that was visible was the man's legs and feet. When her photographer uncle who owned a photography studio came to visit her mother Amy told him, "This is the only picture of my grandfather that we have. So please remove the cow so that I may see what he looked like." It is the same curiosity which led the magi to follow the star of Bethlehem. Hence we need to become the photographer uncle of Amy to remove the cow for her to see the grandfather; we need to become the star or spark of light in the darkness of our world, so that modern magi may find their way to Jesus.

This is the good news we celebrate on this feast of the Epiphany. This is the good news contained in today's Gospel. It is the good news that by following Jesus and living according to his teaching, we can find our way to Bethlehem and help others find their way, also.

Let's close with a meditation by Howard Thurman. When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with the flocks, then the work of Christmas begins: to feed the hungry, to release the prisoners, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among brothers, to make music with the heart.