

EPIPHANY (Manifestation)



However, if we listened carefully the gospel of today, we would notice that there is no mention at all about the Three Kings and that the names of these three kings are Melchor, Gaspar and Baltazar. Rather, the gospel refers to them as Magi. “When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea... behold, magi, came from the east to Jerusalem and asked: ‘where is the baby born to be the king of the Jews?’” (vv. 1-2). The gospel calls them as magi and not kings. Who are the magi? The magi are astrologers. They studied astrology which is about the stars and other heavenly bodies especially its movements and meaning, just like the horoscope of today.

Sometimes they are also called ‘wise men’ because of their zealous observances of justice and virtue.

By common belief, they were called before as Three Kings because of the the messianic prophecy in Psalm 72:10-11 which says: “The kings of Tarshish (Spain or Turkey) and the Isles shall offer gifts; the kings of Arabia (Sheba) and Seba (Africa) shall bring tribute. All kings shall pay him homage and all nations shall serve him. They thought that they were the one already, so they call them the Three kings because of the three places mentioned in this chapter of Psalm.

Well, anyway, it is called “epiphany” because Jesus revealed Himself not only to the Jews, the chosen people, but also to pagan visitors. The word ‘Epiphany’ is from the Greek term “*epiphanein*” which means “manifestation.” In other words, Epiphany is first and foremost the Feast of God’s revelation of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, to the world. Jesus is Savior not only of Israelites, the chosen people, but also to everybody. And in this sense, I am sure that the Magi represent all the other peoples of the world.

As you listen to our gospel, which is a very nice story, taken from the gospel of St. Matthew (2:1-12), about how God guided the three wise men to the Baby Jesus by means of a special star. How nice it would be for each of us to have a star to follow in the right direction. Well, as in the book entitled ‘*A Thought for Today*’ said that all of us have stars to follow. But this

time they are not moving across the heavens. Our stars today are right down here on earth with us.

Our stars are people and places and things that show us the way, that inspire us, that attract us.

Sometimes people are our stars. Nowadays we call famous singers or sports people or actors, stars. Young people make heroes out of these stars. They imitate their speech, their dress and their ideas. In the same way we follow the religious heroes we call saints. We take their names and we try to follow their examples. They are our stars that guide us to Jesus and God.

Sometimes a good example can be a star. It pulls us and draws us. A good idea can be a star. Perhaps we get it from something we hear or read. Sometimes sickness and pain can be a star: it makes us useless for a while and gives us time to think.

The Bible is also a star. Even King Herod brought the three wise men into contact with the Bible. The Bible is an excellent guide for people looking for Jesus. But according to the book entitled, *From Spring to Life*, said that the Bible is not enough, for we need people who will explain it. Many people go around with the Bible today, but it is sad that so many use it not to lead us to the meaning of Jesus' words, but to convince us of their own interpretation. Jesus did not give us the New Testament. It was the Christian community that accepted his word and transmitted part of it to us through the Bible. Without the Christian community, we would have no gospels today and we still need the church's help to understand them. But, of course, Jesus Christ is our guiding star to God. He is our way, our truth and our life.

Of course, there is also such thing as following the wrong star. We do that when we look down and not up. Perhaps we can explain that with a little example. On a clear night, we can see stars reflected in ponds of water. No matter how dirty the water is, we see the stars down there. Since it is usually easier to reach down than to reach up, many people reach down into muddy water for their stars and then they find out that those were no real stars down there. People who reach down and not up for their stars are people whose star in life is: money, sex, drink, power, popularity, personality, bad company or patronage association. They follow these and perhaps end up in a swamp where there are also reflections of stars – but not real stars.

Look upwards and not downwards for your stars. Then one day you will win and have stars in your eyes as we say of very surprised happy people.

AMEN.