

**FR. JOHN'S HOMILY**  
**The Epiphany of the Lord, January 3, 2021**

The Christmas season is filled with many grace and blessings, especially as we begin the new year of 2021. We pray God's blessing on this year and that the vaccine will begin to have its effect upon our safety and health. Safety, from the virus, and health, not just physical, we understand the mental and spiritual toll it is having upon us as well. As we pray and wait, we come to celebrate our faith in this Christmas season with the feast of the Epiphany. The Magi, or Wise Men, now find their way to the manger scene in the Church and in our homes. We look for meaning in what the wise men teach us about this mystery of God's incarnation. In some cultures it is such an important feast day that Epiphany is the day when they exchange gifts. It remembers the gifts of the Magi to Jesus. The word Epiphany means manifestation, making known, or revealing. Epiphany is God making known His presence in and to the world. Epiphany is not only about the Magi and gift-giving, it is about celebrating God revealing Himself to us in many ways. Epiphany is about the revelation of God to all. It is about God entering into our world making Himself known, revealing that He is God, our Emmanuel. Since Epiphany means manifestation, God is not limited just to the Wise Men event today. It is about the birth of Jesus, being revealed to the Magi, however there is much more about Epiphany. Epiphany is about the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan and God saying "This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased." Epiphany is about changing the water into wine at the Wedding Feast of Cana when many came to believe in Him. Epiphany is about the transfiguration of Jesus before Peter, James, and John. God says, "This is my beloved Son, Listen to Him." All of these are ways God has made Himself known to us. And Epiphany is about this Mass, He not only reveals Himself to us, makes Himself known to us, and time and time again willingly gives Himself to us, in His body and blood, soul and divinity. This is what today's feast is about, celebrating and participating in God's presence and in His love.

As we celebrate God making Himself known to us, we have two different people, two different attitudes, we look at in our Gospel today. We have King Herod and the Magi, the Wise Men. King Herod symbolizes all that is about pride and self-preservation, selfishness. Everything in Jerusalem revolved around him. People watched his every move, they talked about where he spent money or exercised his power. They wondered what he knew. And everything in Herod's life revolved around keeping himself propped up to be influential. He wants to keep his wealth, he wants to keep his power, and he wants to keep his knowledge and anything that is a threat to this he wants to do away with. We know what he did after he heard the news about the birth of Jesus. He killed all the male babies two years old and younger in Bethlehem and the surrounding area to end a threat to him and his kingdom. We know that when living a life of pride and self-preservation, the end result will not be life-giving and will not be one of joy or peace, but one of a slow death and great sorrow.

Now, The Magi, the Wise men, represent those who are the opposite of Herod's attitude. They are of humble and generous. They know, maybe not fully, that what they are about, but they travel anyway. They realize that in this journey there is something greater than themselves out there in the world. The star that leads them and guides them represents this greater calling. What they have received is from God. Their wealth, power and knowledge is symbolized by the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They knew this and therefore were aware of this birth of a new born King.

They had seen the signs in the sky. They knew this truth and therefore went to pay homage. How different their attitude was from Herod. Herod who was bent on keeping himself in power and wealth saw everything as a threat but the magi saw things totally different. They knew that what they had was a gift from God. And therefore with this sense of gratitude as they see this new born king, they rejoice and offer back to God what they had. Not just what they had, but the very best they had to offer.

As we come to celebrate this Feast of the Epiphany we are going to relate to one of the two attitudes today. It is either the attitude of King Herod where pride and selfishness dominate or the attitude of the Magi, Wise Men, who are humble and generous and giving as we come to Manger scene. As we come to God our gifts, is it the best we have to offer? As we offer our gifts of time, talent, and treasure is there humility and generosity in our offering toward God? All because we recognize how good God has been to us, and we return to Him with gratitude to say "Thanks".

In the end of this encounter today of Jesus, the Light and Truth that is now in the world, it does call for a change. In King Herod, the truth and light revealed what lived in his heart: darkness and evil. When you draw closer to the Light, The Truth, to Jesus, it will be an Epiphany. It will reveal what lives within. So The Magi, the Wise Men, after paying homage to Jesus and giving their gifts went home by another way. Why? Because the encounter of the Mystery of God changed them. Indeed, they could not go home by the same way. To avoid King Herod and his men, yes, but something even more than that happened to them. After beholding the child where the light of the star led them, they were changed forever, for the better. We too when we encounter Jesus and this great mystery of love it changes us. When we leave, we are different as well. Anytime we encounter an Epiphany, God's manifestation of love, we are different. And are called to go forth as the wise men and women today to be God's Epiphanies to others.

In this Holy Season of Christmas, we receive the blessing of the church so that as we encounter God's love. We too go forth different revealing to everyone our Faith in this great Mystery.

May God who has called you out of darkness into his wonderful light pour out in kindness his blessing upon you and make your hearts firm in faith, hope, and charity.

And since in all confidence you follow Christ who today appeared in the world as a light shining in darkness, may God make you, too, a light for your brothers and sisters.

And so when your pilgrimage is ended, may you come to him whom the Magi sought as they followed the star and whom they found with great joy, the Light from light, who is Christ the Lord. Amen.