

Epiphany - C
Isaiah 60:1-6;
Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6;
Matthew 2:1-12
Little Flower - 1/2/22

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Epiphany. In Western Christianity, Christmas is the primary feast. However, in the early Church and especially in Eastern Christianity, Epiphany is the older and more important feast. In earlier times, the Church celebrated three mysteries on the Solemnity of the Epiphany: the visit of the Magi, Jesus' baptism by John, and the wedding feast at Cana. The Liturgies the next two Sundays will commemorate Jesus' baptism and the wedding feast at Cana.

Christmas and Epiphany are two sides of the same coin. On Christmas we celebrate Jesus' birth, the Incarnation of the Son of God. On Epiphany we celebrate the meaning of his birth, the meaning of the Incarnation. On Christmas we celebrate Jesus' manifestation to the Jews, represented by the shepherds. On Epiphany we celebrate Jesus' manifestation to the Gentiles, i.e., to the peoples of the world, represented by the magi.

The coming of the magi was the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah: "*Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you: Your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses.*" Jesus draws people to himself. As Jesus said in John's Gospel, "*And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself*" [12:32]. In other words, Christ's death on the cross draws us to him. As the hands and feet of Jesus in today's world, we are called to bring Christ to others and by so doing bring others to Christ. The best and really only way to do this is by loving others as Christ loves them.

In his Letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul mentions the mystery made known to him by revelation. According to Paul, the great mystery revealed to him was "*that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*" In other words, Jesus came to reconcile us to God and one another. As St. Irenaeus wrote, "The Son of God became what we are that he might make us what he is himself." In other words, the Son of God became human that he might make all people sons and daughters of God and, therefore, brothers and sisters of one another. As Christians, therefore, we, as individuals and as a Christian community, are called to be instruments of healing, peace, and reconciliation in our families, in our church, and in our world. We are called to tear down walls and build bridges. According to the teaching of Pope Francis, we are especially called to reach out to and welcome the marginalized. We are called to be welcoming people, a welcoming community, to all people.

Today's Gospel suggests two other themes. First, the magi journeyed to see Jesus. Faith is also a journey. Our faith journey has four stages. When we are little, our faith is the faith of our parents. As we get a little older, our faith is the faith of our community. As we get still older, we begin to question our faith. We begin to question what we have learned from our parents and our community. If we continue on the journey even when it is difficult, our faith becomes personal, and we have a personal relationship with Jesus.

Finally, my brothers and sisters, whom did the magi, sometimes described as wise men, other times as kings, and still other times as magicians or sorcerers, come to see and worship? It was not a wise man teaching or a king ruling or a magician working wonders. They came to see an infant. In other words, God was found in a tiny child. In our lives, where will we find God and Jesus? We find God and Jesus in others, ourselves, and the world, in our ordinary everyday life. However, this Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, whom the magi traveled from afar to see and worship, is most present to us in the Eucharist if, like the magi, we believe.