

FEAST OF EPIPHANY : JAN 2, 2011

The word Epiphany, which means *appearance* or *manifestation* or showing forth, marks Jesus' first appearance to the Gentiles. "Epiphany" refers to God's Self-revelation as well as to the revelation of Jesus as His Son. The angels revealed Jesus to the shepherds, and the star revealed him to the Magi, who had already received hints of Him from Jewish scriptures. Later, God the Father revealed Jesus' identity to Israel at His baptism in the Jordan. In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus revealed himself as the promised Messiah. These multiple revelations are all suggested by the Feast of the Epiphany.

The three gifts mentioned in the Gospel: Gold, frankincense and myrrh may be thought of as prophesying Jesus' future. Gold was a gift for kings; frankincense was offered to God in Temple worship; and myrrh was used by the High Priest as an anointing oil, and to prepare bodies for burial. These gifts were not only expensive but portable. Perhaps Joseph sold the gifts to finance the Holy Family's trip to Egypt. The gifts might have been God's way of providing for the journey that lay ahead.

The feast of Epiphany was celebrated by the early Christians with a great enthusiasm. There was a good reason for it: the wise men were the first non-Jewish people who believed in Christ. They searched for the truth and they found Jesus, they found the truth, Truth Incarnate. According to St. Paul, when we are open to his grace, we continually grow in the knowledge of his truth.

In the second reading St. Paul tells the Christians of Ephesus that the calling of pagans to the Faith is something no one would have ever expected. In fact, the Jews were fully convinced that only Jews would be saved by the Messiah. But eventually, those who accepted Christ were mostly Pagans. St. Paul calls this a great mystery, a mystery no man will be able to explain. (Eph.3,4-6)

"It is by grace that you have been saved through faith, and not by anything of your own, but by a gift of God" (Eph.2,8) So let us be grateful to God for having led us to faith in Christ.

Faith in Christ must go on growing within us. We must accept Christ everyday more **firmly**, fulfill his will always more **perfectly**, trust Him always more **completely**. St. Paul knew what he was speaking about when he wrote to the Christians of Ephesus: "May God give you the power, through his spirit, for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith" (Eph.3,16-17)

Faith in Christ went on growing in the wise men, in the apostles, in Mary the Mother of Jesus; they abandoned themselves to God's love and God's plan for them always.

To grow that faith in Christ within our hearts is by sharing that faith with everyone around us. This was the case with everyone who experienced Jesus' goodness during his public life. It should be the same with us; each one of us are called to be a star, a sign, leading people to Christ. Or rather, we ought to become manifestations of Christ to the world, by word of mouth, but above all through our Christian life. Many of us will remember that if we came to faith in Christ it was because someone led us to Him.

We are called to lead people to faith in Christ, not only as individuals but as a community as well. So on this feast of Epiphany let us praise God for having manifested Christ to us and pray to Him that we in turn may manifest Him to the world.

"Lord Jesus, we thank you for bringing salvation to all. May the gospel of salvation be proclaimed to every nation and to every person, Amen.