

Epiphany

6<sup>th</sup> January 2019

'The Magi: beacon of hope for all mankind'

Is 60: "*Nations come to your light*"

Ps 71: "*Before Him all kings shall fall*

*prostrate*"

Eph 3: "*pagans now share the same inheritance*"

Mt 2: Magi . . . gifts of gold, frankincense & myrrh.

It's important that, as Christians, we don't see Christmas as a brief, passing, thing, all too quickly come and gone, but that we celebrate properly this Christmas season with all its commemorations. Christmas Day is just the beginning of the season, which includes the great feasts also of: the Holy Family; Mary's 'Motherhood of God'; the Holy Name of Jesus; the Epiphany (today); and the Baptism of Jesus (next weekend). These beautiful feasts fill out the wider meaning of Christmas, and also allow us to deepen our meditation on the wonder of Christ: God made man, the Lord taking flesh to dwell amongst us. It's why we're keep up these lovely decorations right through the season's end next weekend. It's right to prolong our festivity, as we celebrate with dignity one of the greatest mysteries of God's love for us, as He enters His creation as a new-born child.

The Epiphany itself is, of course, full of exotic details. I know, from watching many children's Nativity

plays over the years, that it's when it gets to the Magi, to the Wise-Men part of the play, that there's an added excitement. The key changes to a more unusual one: camels, robes of rich fabrics, expensive gifts, the long journey! ... an incredible contrast, I suppose, to the simplicity of the Bethlehem stable with the hay, the sheep, and the shepherds. But this is as it should be. The very meaning of the Epiphany is that suddenly Our Lord's birth is touching the whole of humanity. Yes, Our Lord comes in the quiet and the poverty of a Bethlehem night, on the outskirts of known civilization. But with the Magi's visit, it's clear that His coming is not for the few, but for the many ... in fact for all mankind. The baby Jesus isn't about to swap the stable for a palace, or the manger for a throne — Notice that it's the Magi who come to Him, making all that effort, and not Jesus who goes to them — but He certainly is welcoming these Gentile princes, who represent the outside world, and who bring the gifts of their lives and their livelihoods to Jesus, and adore Him. All the world owes Jesus this worship and adoration. He is the Wisdom

of God and the Word of God, and “through Him all things were made.” And here He is, lying in the manger, cared for by Mary & Joseph — but His meaning is not just for them and their time and place; not just for the Jews and their religion; but for us all, of all times and all places.

That’s why this feast holds its place ranking almost with Christmas, and in some parts of the Church even higher than Christmas: for Christ is our true Lord and God, and His coming is now being made known to the world. The Magi made huge efforts to seek out this new-born King, and in some ways they put us to shame. We might sometimes compromise in our efforts to follow Jesus, not placing Him at the heart of all that we believe our life is about. The Magi help us to refocus, and redouble our efforts in being with Jesus. Let us, like them, bring the richest gifts to the Lord: the gift of our lives, of our families, our children, our hopes, our destiny ... lay those things trustingly before the child Jesus, the Lord of all things. We can, and we must, make this worship of Jesus the most central thing, the cause that drives our life’s journey.

Without Jesus as the star that guides us through life, we are lost, without direction or purpose; but when we see that Jesus’s light is a sure guide to what it means to be human, then we can live with a blessed trust. Jesus led the Magi to Himself, so that from the darkness of paganism they could enter into the light of belief. We who live in this same light, must not risk losing the light. We must stay in the light, close to the living Jesus, for we know what darkness is out there: the darkness of unbelief, despair, violence and disregard for our fellow man (it’s all over the news, every day!). The Magi, then, lead us to remember and acknowledge the privilege of knowing and worshipping Jesus, our giving Him every day and indeed our whole lives.

As we keep this feast, let’s draw ourselves closer in to that scene of the stable, where Jesus is, along with the poor and the rich, the shepherds and the Magi, the saints and the sinners ... Jesus welcomes all, and wants all to know and love Him, and receive from Him the gifts that outweigh anything we could ever give: if we truly offer Him our lives; then He will gladly offer us eternal life.