

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord - The Wise are Still Seeking Him January 2, 2022.

Epiphany literally means “revealing;” it’s about taking away the veil that covers something. It is about unveiling what Luke promises us: that *all flesh shall see the salvation of God*”; and what Isaiah foretold, that: *the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together.*” The ancient magi of the Gospel reading (Matthew 2:1-12) traveled from darkness into light. They sought the Prince of Peace. They were astrologers, people who read the signs of the sky. The sudden appearance of a bright star was the symbol of the birth of a great one. They traveled west, following the star's course, until they came to Judea. Then they went to the place where they expected a great one to be found: the palace. Instead of a great one, they found Herod. Now, Herod was only concerned with one thing in his life, and that was Herod. His own scripture scholars found that the coming Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. But Herod feared the political effects of a Messiah coming during his reign. His darkness was so deep that he would attempt to kill the baby, challenging God's plan rather than trusting God to care for him if he also were to come into the light. Meanwhile, the magi's faith had become so deep that after they found the child and worshiped him, they put their lives in jeopardy and did not return to Herod. Once they possessed the child in their hearts, the magi could live in His light and die in His peace. Because Herod refused to enter into the child's light, he would die in turmoil and in darkness.

Why did Herod try to destroy Jesus, but the Magi worshipped him? The difference can be summed up in one word: **humility**. Herod lacked the humility the Magi had. And history tells us where that lack landed him. Herod was controlling and suspicious, even of his own wife and three of his sons and ended up murdering them. In fact, his whole life was a series of violent, horrible crimes making him universally hated, even by his closest collaborators. Even on his death bed, he ordered the slaughter of a thousand of his best servants and ministers in a stadium to be sure there was mourning and sadness in his kingdom up on his death. Christianity eventually brought down the Roman Empire and many other dynasties. In our times, Christianity has brought down some forms of Communism. ***Christians are revolutionaries in the Holy Spirit. Christmas is the celebration of Jesus birthday. We want to give Jesus a present for His birthday, a Christmas present. Jesus would like to have a revolution for His birthday/Christmas present — a revolution of repentance and love in our hearts leading to a revolution of evangelization and discipleship, which will overturn the culture of death and replace it with a civilization of life and love. Give Jesus what He wants for Christmas.***

There is a story for the Epiphany, a story developed from a wonderful essay on three modern wise men by the famous English author of a hundred years ago, G. K. Chesterton. The three modern wise men journeyed to a city of peace, a new Bethlehem, where they offered their gifts. The first would offer gold suggesting it could buy the pleasures of earth. The second would offer the modern scent of chemistry, the power to drug the mind, seed the soil, control the population. The third would offer myrrh in the shape of a split atom, the symbol of death for anyone who opposed the ways of peace. When they arrived they met St. Joseph at the gate, but he refused them entrance. "What more could we have brought to demonstrate that we are men of peace," they protested. "We carry with us means to provide affluence, control nature and destroy enemies." St. Joseph whispered something into the ear of each man. Then they turned and went away with heavy hearts. Just guess what St. Joseph told each of them? **He told them that they had forgotten the child.**

With all our technology, with all our wealth, and with the power we have to dominate many forces of nature, we are convinced that we are wise. We can fly high to the moon and beyond. We can enter deep submersibles and see underwater animals that have never reached the surface. Diseases like small pox and polio are distant, bad memories. We are convinced that we can find ways to ensure peace and happiness for everyone even with the current COVID-19 pandemic. This might all seem good, but we have forgotten the child. Peace only comes through the Prince of Peace. Men cannot create peace apart from God. A century ago, Pope Benedict XV decried the Treaty of Versailles. He said that God was not even mentioned in the treaty. The Treaty of Versailles ended WWI the so-called "war to end all wars." How well did that treaty work? Nineteen years later World War II began.

"Wise men are still seeking him." Are we wise? Do we seek him? Or do we have all the answers in our technological pockets? Do Siri, or Google hold the answers we really need? I once asked Google, **"Why am I here?"** The response was, **"Religion can give you an answer. The entity (if one exists) that created the universe can do it's best to convince you of "the truth". But all that matters is what you believe"**. Technology cannot answer this deep questions of life. It can only deal with relatively surface issues. The true answer is provided by faith and what we believe, **We are here to know, love and serve God in this world and be with Him in the next."** We must be convinced that unless our thoughts revolve around Jesus Christ, our Way to the Father, not only do we not have the answers about life, we don't even know the questions that need to be asked. Although the advance of technology continues and this can and does benefit humankind, we have to ask, **"Is the unbridled use of technology acceptable? Is AI, Artificial Intelligence, the solution to all problems? Do we need to apply ethics to technology? If, so, how?"**

Sadly, many people, perhaps at times all of us, do not plunge our minds into deep questions regarding technological advancement. For example, it seems that self-driving cars appear to be in the future. This seems like a wonderful solution for those who cannot drive. It might even eliminate many accidents. But has the bus/baby problem been solved? What is that? It is a general term for the difficulty or perhaps impossibility of applying ethics to technology. Briefly, a bus cuts off a self driving car. The car is programed to seek the least dangerous course of action. It swerves from the bus where many might be injured and swerves into a crosswalk where a lesser number of people would be injured. A mother and a baby in a stroller are in that crosswalk. They are both killed. Is this acceptable? Some might think so. Most of us would not. A human being behind the wheel could very well pick an option that the car was not programmed to consider: the human being could risk his or her life rather than kill another person. Technology does not have all the answers.

There are many messages carried in this feast day. There is the message of the Word of God manifested to the Gentiles. There is the message of God's secret plan now revealed. There is the message that God calls all people from all nations to Himself. There is a message against prejudice and pride. There is also the message that seeking Christ means wanting Him to transform our lives. This transformation will temper our acceptance of advancements in technology and materialism. **We are not meant to control everything; we are meant to humbly follow Christ, to trust him, to kneel before him, like the Magi, and say with our lives, "Thy will be done, not mine; thy Kingdom come; not mine."** Herod couldn't say that, but the Magi could. They gave everything over to Christ. And they went home full of joy. The Christian way of thinking molds us into wise men and women continually seeking him.