**Reflection on the Sunday Readings**

**January 7, 2018 – The Epiphany of the Lord**

**Isaiah 60: 1-6 Psalm 72: 1-2, 7-8, 10-13 Ephesians 3: 2-3a, 5-6**

**Matthew 2: 1-12**

*“Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you.”*

 One of the hallmarks of Catholicism is the magnificence and beauty of its rituals, especially during the Christmas Season. Those who participated in the Mass at Midnight at Our Lady of Good Counsel (celebrated at 10:30pm on Christmas Eve) will attest to the engagement of all the senses – the smells and bells – inherent in the Solemn Liturgy recalling the Birth of Our Lord. This year in particular, the mass included copious amounts of incense, the ringing of the bells, and the magnificence of solemn and festive hymns as the coming of the Savior was recalled with festive jubilation.

 Some may ask, “Why all the fuss,” especially as the Lord himself was born on that night long ago in the humble silence of a stable and laid in a manger. Is all this necessary? Yet, consider how we welcome loved ones into our own lives. When a child is born, there is celebration and delight. When distant relatives or friends arrive for a long anticipated visit, they are not met with indifference; rather there are shouts of joy and welcome as we gather around those for whom we have long awaited, and in return, are eagerly embraced by visitors from afar. Exuberant celebration is the order of the day!

*“Behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.’”*

 The wise men were not members of the chosen people; in fact, we do not know the specifics of their beliefs other than that they came from a distant country. Yet, although they were, by our standards, pagans, they were not godless. They sought the truth and came in search of the truth, having discerned the signs in nature, to do homage to the newborn king. Although their news was met with consternation by Herod and his ilk, who feared any threat to their own power or privilege, the magi followed the star until at last it stopped over the place where the child and Mary was. *“Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.”*  All in all, quite a fuss!

 The Epiphany (which means “appearance” or “revelation”) is a call to universal celebration, for the Messiah came to save all men and women. Saint Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, reminds us that: *“The Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”* As we reflect upon this joyful promise, let us continue to celebrate, the Sacred Liturgy in its entire splendor. Whether at an all-stops-out solemn liturgy, or in the simple celebration of morning Mass, we should always offer our praise and adoration to God in great beauty and simple humility. Our faith is one of great joy, goodness, truth and beauty. As we heard in the Responsorial Psalm: *“Justice shall flower in his days, and profound peace, till the moon be no more. May he rule from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.”*

Deacon Steven K. Szmutko