



Deacon Steve Szmuto's Reflection
on the Sunday Readings
January 5, 2020 – 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

“And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.” (Matthew 2: 9b)

The word, “epiphany,” is used to describe or illustrate an intuitive grasp of reality, or a sudden manifestation or realization of the essential nature of something significant. In today’s Gospel on the Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord, Matthew tells us of the Magi’s visit at the rising of the star. Signs pointed to Jesus, the newborn king. However, not all greeted their visit and this profound news with enthusiasm, interpreting the reported birth of the child as a threat to the established order and their own individual spheres of power and influence. Herod was particularly troubled; a venal man, he would do everything and anything to preserve his power, choosing to disregard the signs around him. Yet the Magi, foreigners in a strange land, discerned and chose wisely, offering their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh in homage to the newborn king.

I wonder if we would have recognized, or perhaps more significantly, have chosen to recognize, the Messiah had we lived at the time of Jesus’ birth. Certainly, there were many educated in the Hebrew Scriptures and leaders of the Jewish people who chose otherwise. For all of their knowledge of the law and the prophets, most failed to recognize the numerous signs that they could virtually recite from memory. Others refused to recognize the signs, as they pointed to their own shortcomings, fears and vulnerabilities. The Messiah was a threat to the status quo; his coming would bring change and upheaval – and perhaps a radical new way of life to all.

Do we recognize Christ as the ruler of our life? Do we see him in the eyes of our fellow men and women? For that is the call to wisdom. Or do we avert our gaze, ignoring what is plainly before us, to remain in the reality of our own design, and safely within the individual spheres of our influence?

As Catholics, as true disciples of the Lord, we are called to follow the star each time we celebrate the Eucharist. We choose to accept the risen Christ and do him homage. It is a radical conversion of self, prostrating ourselves before the Precious Body and Blood, offering ourselves in humble service to the Lord. Only in such humility are we truly wise and worthy of eternal salvation.

“Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you.” (Isaiah 60: 1)

Deacon Steve Szmuto