

Homily: Feast of the Epiphany: 2024: Is 60:1-6; Ps. 72; Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6; Mt. 2:1-12

***“The Magi’s Example of seeking the Lord is meant for Us to Generously Follow”***

Today we are celebrating the Manifestation or appearance (Epiphany) of God to the Gentiles: **Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior - not just for the Jewish nation, but for the whole world.** The Magi or Wise Men represent the non-Jewish people (Gentiles) coming to visit and accept Jesus in loving devotion. This event possibly happened up to 2 years after Jesus was born. Were there only 3? Well, there could have been more- see the beautiful movie *The Fourth Wise Man* - but traditionally we have viewed them as being 3 in number because of the 3 gifts given to the Christ child. What is the meaning of all this?

1. We have over the last few weeks pondered God’s love for us in coming to us as a little baby, in the person of Jesus. He did his part in coming to save us, but **now what is our response?** *Humility, gratitude, moral goodness of life, wanting to grow in Christian virtue? Repenting of our sins in the Sacrament of Confession and amending our lives? Seeking the fullness of the truth in Christ in the profound depths of our Catholic Faith? Wanting to grow in personal union with God on a daily basis? Sharing the gift of our Catholic Faith with others?* All these things can happen in our lives, in the coming year if we apply our minds and hearts and wills to this noble goal: drawing close to God in loving devotion like the Wise Men. *They are called wise because they sought ultimate meaning and purpose in Christ, who alone is the salvation of the human race. They had proper priorities and the courage to follow their convictions - do we, despite our fears, whatever they may be?* Witness the Magi’s response to Herod; let us follow their example of prudence and courage - in avoiding dangers to our Catholic Faith and protecting this most precious of treasures, since it is our pathway to Heaven, and how we over time develop a living personal relationship with the Blessed Trinity.
2. What do the 3 gifts of the Magi symbolize and how does this apply to our lives? **Gold** was a gift given a king. **Frankincense** was a gift acknowledging divinity & priesthood. **Myrrh** was a gift honoring human dignity and given to prepare one for burial. We can look at these three gifts as symbols of how we can give our lives to Christ on a deeper level. **Gold:** are we willing to let Christ truly be the

King of our lives, or in reality do we often do what we want to do in life without consulting Christ and our Catholic Faith? **Frankincense:** do we acknowledge Christ's divinity, in reality, by listening to Him on a daily basis, particularly by being obedient to the teaching of our Catholic faith in all areas of life, since we believe the teaching of the Church on Faith and Morals is Christ Himself speaking to us? Do we realize this profound truth and with God's help embrace it in daily life? That is why it is SO IMPORTANT to have a copy of the ***Catechism of the Catholic Church*** and to frequently consult its teaching, especially during these confusing times as the world turns away from God. **Myrrh:** humanity and burial - we are called to daily put our old nature to death, with its selfishness and pride, and to embrace our new re-born nature in Christ. This means a constant battle against sin, against our fears, and against complacency. **Never forget:** God's grace can heal the weakness of our human nature. **This is the crux or heart of the spiritual life** - *to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in allowing Him to transform us into the image of Christ, by dying to self and embracing the Crosses of life, in love.* Not easy - but worth it - since it is the narrow path to Heavenly life.

3. This feast calls us to give a **gift** to Jesus like the Magi. The greatest gift ultimately is our life: our mind, heart and free will and showing our gratitude to Christ, esp. by reaching out to the people around us in deeds of charity and sharing our Catholic Faith with them. We evangelize or share our Catholic faith with others primarily by our good example, but we also need to explicitly "give a reason for our hope" (1 Peter 3: 15-16) when the opportunities present themselves, for if we really love our neighbor, we are concerned ultimately about his or her salvation, and not just his or her temporal needs. *By our joy, our sense of hope, a spirit of gratitude, our humble and persistent prayer, and suffering in love, we will be witnessing to our Catholic Faith very effectively.* How desperately this noble witness is needed in our world today. May we like the Magi be people of the Truth, seeking Jesus in all that we do, and giving our lives to Him as a gift, so He can use us to draw many other souls to Himself - since Jesus alone can bring us salvation - as He alone is the WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE leading to Heaven.