

Homily: The Epiphany of the Lord: 2023: Is 60: 1-6; Ps. 72; Eph 3: 2-3a, 5-6; Mt 2: 1-12

“Be Wise like the Wise men”

Today we are celebrating the fact that Jesus came not just to save the Jewish people but the Gentiles (non-Jews) as well. He is the Messiah not just for Israel but for the whole world! The wise men (*magi*) from the East coming to adore Jesus shows the inner desire on the part of all people for salvation from sin, death and evil, which the Incarnation of Jesus begins to bring about. What are the lessons for us in celebrating this beautiful feast?

1. **Ponder God’s infinite love for us!** God came among us in the person of Jesus to live with us, teach us, and save us by His Glorious Incarnation, Birth, earthly Life for 33 years, and then His Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension. And then on Pentecost Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to the Apostles and began the Catholic Church as the Ark of Salvation to continue His mission of salvation until the end of time. **Jesus did His part; now what is our response?!** *Humility? Seeking the Truth? Growing in virtue? Are we excited about our Catholic faith? Do we realize it is the greatest gift that God has given to us in this life? It is the treasure beyond imagining*, for it is the key to entering into eternal bliss with the Most Blessed Trinity - if we live it well! Our Catholic Faith is an infinitely greater gift than any talent we may possess; it is also so much greater than the things the world obsesses about: *looking good, possessions, money, status, notoriety and fame!* Do we comprehend this reality, and prioritize our lives in accord with our Catholic faith? **Our Catholic faith should be the treasure of our life!** Or is it, sometimes in all honesty, an afterthought in our daily life and choices? We go to Mass once a week, maybe, and that’s about the extent of it, in terms of living our Catholic Faith? **Are we a just a cultural pick & choose Catholic, or are we a committed – all in - Catholic?** Something to ponder on this feast of the Epiphany.
2. **What an example the wise men (*magi*) set for us in seeking out God and the Truth.** **Why are they called wise?** The saints say because they were wise because **they established proper priorities in life over the years.** They were humble enough to do Jesus homage and realize that salvation comes from the Jews - as Jesus

points out later in the Gospel of John. Jesus is the King of the Jews and the fulfillment of the Old Testament, and now He is also the Savior of the whole human race, of which the wise men are representatives. They were also wise because they actively sought **goodness** through living a life of virtue. They sought **truth** by living a life of study and reflection, on the meaning and purpose of life: pondering the “**Big Questions.**” Mary and Joseph were surely amazed by their visit to see Jesus. In our life are we searching for ultimate Truth, for deeper union with God? Or are we just satisfied and complacent where we are? If we have questions or even doubts or difficulties in our Faith life, do we honestly and diligently seek answers, in the right places? *By consulting the **Catechism of the Catholic Church**? (the Catechism in a Year devotional) Reading good, orthodox Catholic spiritual books? Asking priests whom we know are faithful - which I always try to be as your Pastor - to the Church’s Magisterium and not making up their own version of Catholicism, for answers to our Faith questions, or at least where to look for an answer? And finally praying and reflecting diligently?* Do we follow this holy pattern in our life of seeking the ultimate truth that can only be found in Jesus and in our Catholic faith, in imitation of the Wise Men?

3. **Finally the Magi or Wise Men teach us that it is not enough to seek the Truth of God, we also need to give a special gift back to Jesus.** They brought Jesus gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These gifts represented: **Kingship** (gold), **Divinity/priesthood** (frankincense) & **Death** (myrrh) respectively. Jesus fulfilled all those roles in His life: king, God/priest & sacrificial offering for our sins. What is our gift in return to Jesus? **The greatest gift** or expression of gratitude to the Lord **is to live out our Catholic Faith to the fullest:** *to study it, to treasure it, to protect it from danger, and to live it with passion and integrity.* God gives us the holy means to do so: *through the Sacraments, the Bible & Catechism, daily prayer, and daily opportunities to die to self and grow in the likeness of Christ.* Let’s give our life to Him more fully this year! When we do this, He will change our life! We will have a peace, a joy, a meaning, a purpose that alone truly fulfills the deepest desire of the human heart: real union with the Trinity! God bless you.