



Archdiocese of San Antonio
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The Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord January 5, 2014

There are so many voices in our world, so many ideas shouting for recognition. Everyone has “the answer” for a happy life, for being the best you can be. In the noise of all of these voices, many people are asking themselves, what is the big deal with Christianity? Christmas is a nice season, with pretty lights and fun parties, but how is the message of Jesus any different than the other messages out there? Today’s feast answers this question and holds in it a challenge for us all.

Three pagan scholars cross the wilderness guided by only one thing. They saw a star rising in the sky, and they knew something important had happened. These people did not know the God of Israel; they had no interest in worshipping at the Temple or entering into a covenant with the God of the Universe. They had their own beliefs, probably their own religion, but their ability to read the signs written on the skin of the world led them to seek something greater. The very shape of nature pointed them to Christ.

They arrived, inspired by that inward desire for truth, at the crib of a child who was King of the Universe, and they “did him homage.” They knew that the person they had found was worthy of homage and of great gifts. What did they bring? They brought gold – fit for the King, they brought frankincense – fit the for adoration of God most high, and they brought myrrh – fit to anoint the one who would die as the Sacrifice who saved whole world. We don’t know how much of God’s plan these men understood, but we do

know that something about the experience changed them. They did not go back the same as they had come. No, the inspiration of God caused these men to “depart for their country by another way” (Mt).

So, what does this mean? This means that the message we have as Christians is powerful enough to draw complete outsiders to the truth. It is written into creation. God is with us; what is earthly and what is divine are forever joined. There is no longer a need for us to fight and struggle with our nature; we are called to simply join ourselves in homage to God-made-man. The message of Jesus is not merely one of a moral code of conduct, or a divine list of do’s and don’ts. We have rules, yes, and they are important, but the message of Christianity is so much more. We celebrate the truth that God loves us and shares his very life with us. “Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem” – and indeed the whole world! “Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the Lord shines, and over you appears his glory” (Is). God holds none of his glory back; he lets it shine for all the world to see, so that each of his children may follow that light to the place where God and humanity are one forever.

Now, what is the challenge this brings? We can look to the words of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, to explain: “All of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel” (Evangelií Gaudium, 20). Because the Gospel which “has now been revealed” (Eph) is for all people, we must not fail to preach it to all people. God left his fingerprints on the world he created, and they are calling all of his people to the truth. So, we cannot act as Christians only where we are comfortable or accepted, and then shut ourselves off where we are challenged or not accepted. The love God has given us, the share he has given us in his very life, is not for us to keep! We must share it with everyone we meet. This is the very meaning of our life in Christ. “The Gospel joy which enlivens the community of disciples is a missionary joy” (Ibid, 21).

We do not find our joy in money, or possessions, or status, or pleasure. We find our joy in the very life of God who has come to be one with us. This is the Christian message; this is the Gospel. God is with us, and we will never be alone again. May

you go out as missionaries of joy, not to far distant lands, but right here in your families, your social circles, your workplaces, your schools, and even in our Churches. Bring with you the same gifts those wise men did so many years ago. It is not physical gold, frankincense, and myrrh that you will carry, but the Lord himself, the presence of Christ who is forever, King, and God, and Sacrifice. Bring with you salvation and the very life of God.

The Gospel is one of joy everlasting, of life eternal. We seek justice and goodness here, and through it we proclaim the blessedness of the life to come. On this great Solemnity of the Epiphany, keep your eyes fixed on the Star, the Light of the World. May you be changed forever, and then lead others to that Light, so that we may go together to our true home “by another way.” Open your heart to the mission of joy that God has given you, and be confident in your mission. As Pope Francis has said: “Be the first to seek to bring good, do not grow accustomed to evil, but defeat it. The Church is with you, bringing you the precious good of faith, bringing Jesus Christ, who ‘came that they may have life and have it abundantly.’” (Address at the Varginha favela, Rio de Janeiro).

May our Lady, who is herself the Star of the New Evangelization, teach us by her example and through the grace of her intercession to carry her Son to all we meet. May we, like her, bear the “glory of the Lord” to all the world.