

January 3, 2021 – Feast of the Epiphany

Dear Parishioners:

Today, we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord. It is to commemorate the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi. There is a part of the story of the Magi that puzzles me.

Why they did not keep following the star to Bethlehem, instead, went to King Herod and asked him where the new-born king of the Jews was? If you follow the main road, you only need to go down 5.6 miles from Jerusalem to get to Bethlehem. There was no reason for them to go to Herod. However, for some reason, they visited him, and this incident actually caused a great tragedy. When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under.

Why did the magi do that? A clue appears when they set out after their audience with Herod. “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.” The phrase “the star that they had seen at its rising” is the key. They didn’t see the star that they had followed from its rising when they arrived in Jerusalem. So, in search of a king of the Jews, they had no choice but to go to the palace and ask Herod where the Messiah was born. With the answer of Bethlehem, they left Jerusalem and entered the road to Bethlehem, and then they saw the star again.

Did the star disappear in Jerusalem? I don’t think that’s the case. The star must have been over there. It was only hidden by the darkness of sin that prevailed in Jerusalem. The magi, confounded and confused, went to Herod, who represented darkness and evil, resulting in the killing of innocent infants. Had they not paid a visit to Herod it could’ve been avoided. The magi who saw and worshiped Jesus who revealed Himself in public, did not return to Herod, but departed for their country by another way. Those who have seen and worshiped Jesus as the Light cannot go back to where darkness reigns because light and darkness cannot coexist.

Today, the star can be likened to the Church. Just as the star guided the magi to Jesus, the Savior, the Church also leads many souls, who seek truth and salvation, to Jesus. That’s why the Church is called the Sacrament of

Salvation. In other words, the Church is a sign of salvation, which means that you can find the way of salvation in the Church.

However, there are times when the Church does not faithfully fulfill her mission. It is not only because her light is obscured by the darkness and sin that dominate in the world, but because some members of the Church prevent the light from shining to people. Some Church members live in coexistence with darkness by compromising with it. It's not just about certain leaders of the Church who have committed despicable crimes. I am talking about all those who do not accept and observe the teachings of the Church. Because of this, many non-believers go to wrong places and seek salvation. They even go to those who stand for darkness and evil in order to find the truth. As a result, countless innocent lives have been, are being, and will be destroyed.

In today's first reading, the prophet Isaiah says. "Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come." Yes. This is an exclamation to people like Jerusalem, people who try to serve both God and mammon, both light and darkness, both truth and falsity, which is impossible. It is a call reminding us that since Jesus, who is the Light, has come, one must stop straddling a fence, but to humbly admit that a part of oneself is still in darkness, repent, put off that darkness, and rise up in splendor.

Anyone who truly encounters Jesus and properly worships Him can never dwell in darkness. Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. your light must shine before others" (Matthew 5: 14, 16). We cannot shine fully if a part of us is still in darkness. Let us renew our resolution to be always in splendor so that we may lead many souls to Jesus Christ, our Light and our Salvation.

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