

On the same night each year, millions of Catholics around the world gather to follow a single lit candle into a darkened church. Pausing, they reverently light their own candles from this single flame until the entire church is blazing with its light. The night that I am referring to is, of course, the Easter Vigil, and that flickering flame from the Paschal Candle represents Christ, the One True Light, who entered the world to set men free from their sins. The candles held by those present represent the faith which they received at their baptism, a faith which they are called to use to light the world on fire.

Today, we gather to recall others who also followed a single light into the darkness. The Scriptures tell us that a group of Magi journeyed from the east, guided by the light of a star, as they searched out a newborn King. They were men of science, guided initially by their study of nature. And yet, at the same time, they were men of faith. When they passed through the deserts into Jerusalem, unable to follow the star any further, their hearts continued to call them forward. So they spoke of their journey with the Jews who then opened the Scriptures to the Magi, showing them that they must journey on to the little town of Bethlehem. There, the Magi finally found the true light of the world and they laid their gifts at His feet.

In studying the journey of the wise men, we can discover lessons about our own journey of faith. The most important truth which we must take away today is the fact that every single one of us here is called to be a magus as well, called to go forth seeking the light of truth which will illumine all the nations. As with the Magi, our journey of faith will not be easy, leading us through deserts and mountains. Despite this, there is nothing to fear because the light which guides us will give us water in the desert and use the mountains to show us beauty which cannot be glimpsed from below.

It is important to recognize that the Magi's journey would have been impossible without their intellectual reason. It was through their study of the natural world that they saw a sign of momentous things in the star which they began to follow at its rising. This needs to be highlighted because some people today say that belief in God requires us to suspend our reason. This couldn't be further from the truth. There is no need to fear truth because God is the author of all Truth. This means that all truth we study, no matter what it is, can lead us to God. We are not called to suspend our reason when we walk through the doors of a church, but instead are called to embrace it and use it in our search for God. In his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, St John Paul II said, "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of the truth."

As was alluded to by this quote, human reason left unaided can only take us so far in our search for God because God exists outside of the natural realm. In itself, reason cannot truly prove or disprove God but only indicate the possibility that God exists. To journey past this earthly Jerusalem to the heavenly one above, we must also turn to faith. Just as the Magi had to study the Scriptures to complete their journey, we must also learn to search the Scriptures using the reason God has given us as well as searching through our hearts in prayer. Only then can we make the final ascent which allows for an encounter with God.

As we make this journey of faith, we will discover that our hearts desire something greater than that which the world has to offer us, that we were made for something more than this broken world around us. And yet, despite this deep desire of our hearts, we cannot reach past our broken humanity to eternity on our own. It is only when we submit ourselves, laying ourselves and our gifts at the feet of the Christ child as the Magi did, that we finally find ourselves and receive everything that we have been seeking.

The Magi reveal to us that we will only find true peace in Christ. It is only in Christ that faith and reason can coexist. For He is the True Light which illumines the nations and fills the desire of every human heart. Once we have received this light, we cannot help but desire to share it with others and invite them into the journey as well. Recall that the Magi were not Jews and yet they were some of the first to worship the newborn King. God's saving love is for all people of all times and all places. And yet, there are still so many longing hearts in the world who do not know of God's love. People of different cultures and beliefs, people of different orientations and persuasions. And yet, Christ came for each and every single one of them, and we are called to be like the Magi and bring God's love to all of them, making a home for them here in this place.

Each one of us here has been called and invited to continue the journey of faith which began with our baptism, seeking God with all of our hearts so that He can illumine our minds with His truth. It is only when we worship Christ, laying our gifts at His feet, that He can fill our lives with His light, a light which we must in turn carry out to those who are still trapped in the darkness. Like candles in a dimly lit church, this will help to spark every human heart aflame with God's love until the entire world is blazing with His Truth.