

EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

January 1, 2022

ARISE, SHINE; FOR YOUR LIGHT HAS COME

We just celebrated the birth of Christ. Today we celebrate another important feast, the Epiphany of the Lord. Epiphany means “Manifestation” or “Appearance”. It is about the revelation to the Gentiles that the Savior has come for all peoples of all nations. It was first believed that the Messiah would come for the Jews. “A star shall advance from Jacob, and a staff shall rise from Israel that shall smite the brows of Moab,” (Nm.24:17). This was the oracle of Balaam.

Israel in exile was told to rise and shine for her light had come and the glory of the Lord had risen upon her. The prophet Isaiah continued to tell her what would happen at that time: “Behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you, and His glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall walk by your light, and kings in the brightness of your rising”. Even though Israel was promised prosperity and joy, she was to manifest the glory of God.

The prophecy: “nations shall walk by your light” is fulfilled. Today, we hear Wise Men from the East have come to see the new-born King, because they saw the star. “Where is He who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him”.

Those wise men were Gentiles not Jews, so St Paul tells us that it has now been revealed that Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. The Magi were Gentiles walking by the light of the new-born King. They were considered astrologers, (but not as we know them today). When the Magi went to worship the new-born King they did not go with empty hands, but with something they could offer – gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These items have their significant meanings; gold – king, frankincense – priest, and myrrh – incorruptibility of the body of Christ. This tells us also that Christ came for all peoples, the rich and the poor alike. The first message was given to the shepherds who were considered poor.

You and I are now fellow heirs to the kingdom, and members of the same body. This means that the glory of the Lord has risen upon us too and so we should rise

and shine. We are reminded of the famous passage: “You are the light of the world and salt of the earth,” (Mt5:13-14). How does this apply to you and me? What is your light like? Is it colored or white? The shining star led the Magi to where the child Jesus was. Christians today have not put a bushel basket on their light but colored it, so people see wrong things as if they are real or good. Instead of nations and peoples walking by our light we are making them stumble every day. We deceive them like Herod who pretended to have good intention to worship the Infant Jesus. St. Paul has this advice for us: “prove yourselves innocent and straightforward, children of God beyond reproach in the midst of a twisted and depraved generation – among whom you shine like the stars in the sky,” (Phil.2:15).

Do you believe that the glory of the Lord has risen upon you too? What do you offer God for the glory He has brought to you? Christ does not need gold, or frankincense, or myrrh from you and me. He wants you and me to be true worshippers and to worship Him in spirit and in truth; (Jn.4:23-24).

St Paul also tells us what to do: “I urge you, therefore, by the mercy of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, and pleasing and perfect,” (Rom.12:1-2).

Is my life a star that points to Jesus, or myself? Am I giving my best to Christ? John the Baptist’s life was like the star and so he was considered the Messiah, but he pointed to Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” (Jn.1:29). Are we stars to our family and friends? Are we walking in the light of Christ or still in darkness? I am to shine in my home, school, workplace, Church, and everywhere I find myself.