

Epiphany 2014

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Introduction

I am happy, at long last, to celebrate Sunday Mass here at St. John the Evangelist and especially to do so on the beautiful Solemnity of the Epiphany. I am grateful to Fr. Jerry Bowen for his invitation and for the opportunity to bless your wonderful new daily Mass & adoration chapel. In a very special way, I would like to join with all of you in expressing our warmest thanks to Father Bowen for his dedicated pastoral care of St. John Parish day in and day out! And in greeting Fr. Bowen, I greet all the parishioners who are here this morning, including those of you who forgot that I'd be here and now worry this Mass will go on and on and on. Let me put your fears to rest! This morning I'd like briefly to share with you just a few thoughts that I hope and pray will take us to the heart of great feast we celebrate together.

God Appears in the Our Humanity

The word "epiphany" doesn't often appear in Scripture but Scripture does use the word, "appear", quite frequently to describe the birth of Jesus and the presence of Jesus in the world. Epiphany has to do with the manifestation, the showing forth, of the Son of God. No longer do we rely on images of who God might be. No longer do we rely on mere ideas or theories of who God might be. No longer do we have to wonder whether the ultimate foundation of the world and of our life is good or evil. With the birth of Jesus, God has appeared. He has made himself manifest. As St. Paul says, "the kindness and love of God our Savior for mankind was revealed." This was really good news for the ancients who often thought of the deities as cruel and arbitrary. It is also good news for us and for our contemporaries some of whom wonder if the world is the creation of an intelligent and loving God or if it is an absurd and cruel place.

How did the truth, goodness, and love of Christ appear? Jesus did not invade the world but he appeared in the world, as a helpless child, born into the poverty of our human nature, born into the poverty of a stable, born in the coldness of the night. As Isaiah prophesied this child would be called 'Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.'

Isaiah's prophecy came to pass in a way that exceeded all expectations. At a moment in our human history, God appeared, made himself manifest, by sending His Son who assumed our humanity. A Child in all his weakness is Mighty God. A Child, in all his neediness and dependence, is Eternal Father. A Child, in all his powerlessness, imparts a peace the world cannot give.

The Child in the manger is God from God, light from light, true God from true God. In his helplessness and poverty, a light shone forth upon the whole world. It was not a light blinds but one that enlightens and ennobles human reason, a light that shows us the face of God and in showing us the face of God also shows us who we are, what our great dignity is, and what our destiny is to be.

A Light for the Nations

The appearance of the Son of God in human history was a public act. It was not a private revelation to a chosen few but a light that shone round the world, for, as Isaiah himself foretold, 'his dominion would be wide.' Wise men from afar caught sight of the light, a star that reflects the brilliance, the glory of God's eternal self giving love, appearing now in human history in the human nature of helpless child. And they come from afar with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The wise men have much to teach us - men of reason who became men of faith—kings who learned really how to reign when they worshipped the Prince of Peace. One way to learn from these three mysterious figures of the New Testament is to contrast them with another King, namely, King Herod. Why was it that the Three Kings came from afar searching for truth and upon finding Truth found also love? And why was it that Herod who was on the scene, misunderstood Jesus as a competitor for his earthly power, fulminated and committed murder? The fact is, Herod had no love in his heart and no openness to the truth, whereas the wise men came with open and good hearts. They allowed the light admittance into their hearts of hearts and so they came to worship the newborn King in a manger.

God has appeared. He has revealed himself. God is no longer an idea, a prophecy, an image; no longer just a voice. In Christ Jesus, he has a face upon whom the wise men gazed. Revelation is not merely a book we carry around in our pocket. It calls for a good heart; it calls for faith, a strong and active faith. It calls for us to look upon the

face of Jesus in love. Only then does the light of his revelation shine in our hearts. Only then does the light of Christ shine through us and through our deeds on to the world around us and onto those who are still searching, who are still wondering what their life is about or whether or not the world is absurd.

Conclusion

In the still early days of this new year, may one resolution trump all the others: may we resolve here and now to give the Lord not gold or frankincense, or myrrh, but the gift of ourselves, our joys and sorrows, our talents and limitations, our sins and worries, confident that once we've given ourselves to the Lord his light, the light of his glory, will shine through us in all our relationships - at home, at work, at leisure, and in our service to those in need. In this way may we lead many to encounter Christ and to walk by his light! May God bless us and keep us always in His love!

Introducción/Saludo

Mis queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo, es una alegría celebrar este domingo de Epifanía con ustedes, la comunidad de la parroquia de San Juan en Columbia (St. John). Hoy celebramos la manifestación de la gloria de Dios a todas las naciones, es decir, a toda la humanidad; celebramos el momento en que la divinidad de Dios, se manifiesta en la humanidad de Jesucristo, Dios y hombre. Saludo con mucho afecto a su párroco, el Padre Gerry Bowen, al Padre Gene Nickol, Padre Leandro Fazolini, al diácono Jim Benjamín, y a todos ustedes quienes son parte de la familia de esta parroquia.

Homilia

Escuchamos resonar con intensidad, en las lecturas de este domingo, que el nacimiento del Niño Jesús trajo al mundo, el cumplimiento de tres promesas importantes : gloria, luz y alegría. San Pablo, en su carta a los Efesios, nos recuerda que fueron muchas las generaciones que estuvieron esperando la promesa de la llegada del Salvador. El que todas las naciones serían partícipes de la misma promesa había sido un misterio en tiempos pasados; pero el Espíritu, reveló a Pablo, y nos revela a nosotros, la luz de este misterio, a través del Evangelio. El profeta Isaías habla de la promesa de la revelación del amor de Dios. al recordar al pueblo de Israel, oprimido al regresar de la oscuridad del exilio, que la luz y la gloria del Señor brillará sobre ellos, y por tanto se verán radiantes de alegría. Es más, la luz

del Señor invitará a aquellos de pueblos lejanos a encaminarse hacia la luz. El evangelio de hoy nos relata como los magos del lejano oriente siguieron la luz de una estrella en su búsqueda del Rey recién nacido. La luz de la estrella los guió hacia Belén, donde encontraron al Niño Jesús y llenos de alegría, los magos contemplaron la gloria del Niño, lo adoraron y le dieron sus tesoros como regalos. Así como los Reyes Magos, viniendo de tierras lejanas, se postraron en adoración ante el Señor de los Señores, nosotros también estamos llamados a tener esta misma actitud. Reconociendo que Dios se manifestó a toda la humanidad, a través de un dulce y tierno Niño, le damos a El nuestro amor como regalo. Al igual que el pueblo de Israel, nosotros también nos encontramos oprimidos por varias circunstancias, ya sean pruebas económicas, de falta de trabajo, de salud, o de paz. A pesar de las distintas dificultades que nos afligen, nuestro corazón abierto para reconocer a Dios con humildad y nuestro amor, son los tesoros que le podemos ofrecer al Niño Jesús. Hoy, en esta fiesta de la Epifanía, celebramos con alegría, la revelación del amor de Dios, en la humanidad de Cristo, no sólo para los creyentes del pueblo de Israel, sino también para todos los pueblos de todas generaciones. En Jesucristo se cumple la promesa de Isaías, que la luz y la gloria del Señor llenarán los corazones de alegría; y esta promesa es para toda la humanidad. Las palabras del Papa Francisco nos recuerdan que, “Los Magos siguen fielmente aquella luz que los ilumina interiormente, y encuentran al Señor. En este recorrido que hacen los Magos de Oriente está simbolizado el destino de todo hombre: nuestra vida es un camino, iluminados por luces que nos permiten entrever el sendero, hasta encontrar la plenitud de la verdad y del amor, que nosotros cristianos reconocemos en Jesús, Luz del mundo.” Ofrezcanle al Niño Jesús su amor y el compromiso de crecer en su fe! Sigamos la luz y permanezcamos en el camino, como lo hicieron los reyes magos. Pidamos que ellos nos acompañen en nuestra búsqueda de la luz divina para crecer cada vez más en santidad, de modo que podamos ser discípulos misioneros, evangelizando con alegría, anunciando con nuestras vidas, la gloria de la luz de Jesucristo, para el consuelo de todos, especialmente para los inmigrantes y los más necesitados. Les deseo muchas bendiciones durante esta fiesta de los Reyes Magos y que este nuevo año sea lleno de la gloria, la luz y la alegría de Cristo. Que Dios los bendiga y los guarde siempre en su amor!

Palabras de Agradecimiento y Clausura

Les agradezco de todo corazón por haberme invitado a celebrar la Santa Misa en St. John. Agradezco también al Padre Bowen, al Padre Fazolini, y al diácono Benjamín, por su hospitalidad, y a todos los que sirvieron en varias formas en esta Liturgia. Que Dios los bendiga y los guarde siempre en su amor!