

Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord: A Manifestation of God's Saving Presence to All

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-2,7-8,10-11,12-13; Ephesians 3:2-3a,5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

Dear friends and family of the Co-Cathedral of St. Theresa Parish,

Just as our celebration of Christmas marks the revelation that God is one with us, the Emmanuel, the feast of the Epiphany, celebrates God in Jesus manifests that he stands by us, stands with us, stands for us in our great need of a Savior. As we end the Christmas season, we are confronted with the invitation to "come and adore him," just like the response of the shepherds and the Magi; they came and adored the child Jesus. It is a beautiful occasion to ponder our faith response to Jesus, whom we behold and worship at the altar of the Holy Eucharist.

The story of the Magi could also be our story. Their journey represents our life of faith in responding to God's offer of salvation. They left behind the comfort of their homes and went beyond their familiar world to search for the newborn king. They were guided by the strange star that functions like a GPS (Global Positioning System) which led them to an unexpected place in Bethlehem. It was a lowly place, an animal shelter! There they found the child and were exceedingly joyful. Their offering of gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh manifested who the child Jesus is and the mission he plays in our lives as king, priest, and prophet. Respectively, he is the truth, the way, and the life; the only mediator between God and man, and the sacrificial lamb whose death restored our life with God.

The journey of the Magi ends with the description: "Having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way" (Matt. 2:12). Discernibly, after their encounter, their lives were never the same again. Just as the Magi's encounter with the Savior changed their lives, we hope that our encounter and reception of our Lord Jesus in the Holy Eucharist that we already knew in faith draws us to behold the beauty of God' sublime glory.

Symbolically, the mysterious star that guided the Magi reminds us of the significance of the gift of faith. It is like a GPS (God's Prompting System). Just as it would be impossible for the Magi to reach their destination without the light of the star, without faith, our journey would be like groping in the dark and empty. The Church profoundly begs for this grace of the light of faith in the Prayer After Communion: "Go before us with heavenly light, O Lord, always and everywhere, that we may perceive with clear sight and revere with true affection the mystery in which you have willed us to participate." Our faith opens our eyes to recognize that what we will find and encounter is bigger than us and often brings surprises. Let us remember to do "holy maintenance" for our faith in the Lord through daily prayers, reading the Bible and the lives of Saints, works of charity, Confession, and especially regular reception of the Holy Eucharist.

As it was in the past, our Lord Jesus often makes himself known in ordinary places, amid darkness, and hidden from worldly eyes. He can be found in the smile of an innocent child, in a troubled and financially stricken family, in the agonizing expression of a sick person in bed, in the bitter tears of the abused wife, in the homeless and destitute person, in the lonely elderly, in the stressed pregnant young woman, in the struggle of the refugees, those victims of human trafficking and others. Whenever we look into the eyes of the poor or suffering person, we are gazing into the eyes of Jesus Christ. We are Christians, not for our sake, but for others.

Several years ago, I met an older adult couple whose house was soon to be foreclosed. I saw in their eyes sadness and hopelessness. I felt the same since I didn't have money to give or a house to offer; I had only myself. During our dinner, we talked not much about their home but about their life, relatives, dogs, and cats, and what was so inspiring was when the wife said: "Though we may lose our house, we still have each other. Thank you, father." I knew I hadn't given them that much, but with the brief encounter, they seemed to gain hope and changed their perspective. They looked at the brighter side and the things they could do. It was faith that led them to see the light. It was a manifestation of the glory of God.

Let us thank God for all the people who have lighted our way and brought us closer to God. Often, the faith of ordinary people who struggled and yet trusted in God touched our hearts and led us to the very heart of God.

Usually, it is not the famous somebody but the little someone and unassuming people who have made a difference in our life that led us to encounter Jesus. And let us pray that Jesus, whom we adore and receive in the Holy Eucharist, shines through our lives in deed and truth.

God bless you!

Fr. Manny Hewe
Pastor