

2021 Epiphany

1. **Think for a moment, as we begin to reflect upon this feast, about Mary** soon after she conceived. What did she do? Think too, of the shepherds who saw Jesus in the crib. What did they do afterwards? Think also about Anna and Simeon who were the privileged few to behold Jesus and hold him in their arms in the Temple. **What did they do after they had seen him?** Finally, think about the Magi. What could they have done after they adored Jesus and returned to their country by another way? Having “adored in him the great God, not despising the appearance of the infant they saw, but praising the greatness of his divinity” (St. Basil, Homily 6 on Epiphany) **all of them spoke about him to others.**

2. **But more than this, the question that emerged for me when meditating on these readings was, “Why did those who were impacted by the light feel compelled to speak about it?”** Why, after receiving the light of the faith, do we feel compelled to share it with others? Why, on the other hand, are many silent about the light of faith they have received? **I found the answer in the star that guided the Magi to the manger.**

3. **The star of Bethlehem was no ordinary star.** No star has the capacity to guide someone to an exact spot on the earth’s surface, to a particular person from its position in the sky. The Magi’s experience of the star is carefully narrated by St. Matthew. The star awakens their curiosity; it then guides them; it beckons to them to move forward; it stops so that they can read its silent language. **It is an image of what our**

faith in Jesus Christ does to us. Faith is not just something we believe in. Nor is it simply Someone we believe in, the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Faith is Jesus alive in us. It’s not just a power to see and behold, but a power to transform and pull us forward into a new life. **It not only pulls us forward but pulls the whole Church forward, pulls the whole world forward into the new life of God:**

“Your sons shall come from far away...” (Is. 60: 4)

“Nations shall come to your light...” (Is 60: 1)

“the wealth of the nations shall come to you...” (Is. 60: 5)

4. **What attracts the sons? What attracts the nations?**

Isaiah seems to point to the answer:

“the glory of the Lord rising upon Zion...” (Is. 60: 2)

“the brightness of your dawn...” (Is 60: 3)

St. Paul too has been captured by the brightness of this light:

“the mystery has been made known to me by revelation...” (Eph 3:3)

“the gentiles have become fellow heirs...” (Eph 3: 6)

All this to say that those who were in darkness have become participants in the glory of the Lord, in the brightness of Zion’s unprecedented dawn. What is that dawn? “The promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel” (Eph 3:6). **He is the Light behind our faith!**

5. **As I said earlier, faith is not just something we believe in.** Nor is it simply Someone we believe in - the Lord Jesus Christ himself - as great as that gift is. Faith is Jesus alive in us wanting to accomplish in us and in everyone and everything what God accomplishes in himself! God is light. "The Lord is the true light; the prophets and the apostles are illuminated by the light, **so that they may become light.**" (St. Hilary, Treatise on the Psalms, Ps 66:3-5). Nobody is compelled to eat. We eat by nature. No one is compelled to breathe. We breathe naturally! It is our faith in Christ that makes us naturally missionaries. **Faith is God's own Lordship seeking to once again assert his brightness in every soul** and every corner of the universe through us. God wishes to be all in all in us and with us and through us for the world! The light of faith is akin to the goodness of God wanting to diffuse itself so that the whole world is illumined by God. **This is why when we receive the light of faith, we feel impelled to share it, so as to spread it to the ends of the world.**

6. **Epiphany is like a second Christmas!** The light from this mystery is so great that it parallels the light of Christmas. In the East, as you know, this is the feast of Christmas for the faithful. **The feast of the Epiphany allows us to see how the light from the crib illuminates the full stage of time.** With the Magi's visit, the whole world represented by the three kings receives the light of Christ; with the Baptism of the Lord, the whole of Israel (and each of us through our own baptism) receives the light of Christ; thus the whole Church is illuminated with the light of Christ; with the wedding feast of Cana, every marriage receives the light of Christ or is drawn to

the light of the wedding feast of the Lamb where **Bride and Bridegroom, husband and wife, find the goal of unity and the fullness of fruitfulness.**

7. **Here in the liturgy, the gift of the Eucharist and the gift of faith fuse into the glory** that emanates from the Body and Blood of Christ as our new and timeless Bethlehem. Here in the Eucharist, **Jesus is that great star in the heavens** that more than awakens our curiosity; he personally guides us; he beckons us to move forward; he stops so that we can read his silent language. He calls us to our knees to worship him. He remains with us even after we have celebrated the Eucharist in order to guide us through the night of the day by faith. He is the light of attractiveness in us for others, the attractiveness in the Church for the world. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly. **They were compelled to share this divine joy with others.**