

From the Pastor's Desk

Epiphany (according to Merriam-Webster)

— a sudden manifestation or perception of the essential
◇ nature or meaning of something



In the not too distant past, the Solemnity of the Epiphany concluded the Christmas Season in the Church. But those who make such decisions realized that all these feasts, from Christmas through the Baptism of the Lord next Sunday, are a continuation of the incredible mystery of the revelation of Christ, God Incarnate, the Word Made Flesh.

This year we celebrate Epiphany on its traditional day, as January 6th happens to be today, Sunday. Epiphany was traditionally placed twelve days after Christmas (remember the popular Christmas Carol, *The Twelve Days of Christmas*) symbolizing the passage of time for the Magi to arrive. The point: Jesus is thus made manifest to the outside world. He is not just the Jewish Messiah; he is the Redeemer of the world. This was St. Paul's burning mission (highlighted in the Second Reading) — to bring Christ to all people. There are no outsiders in Christ. This is what ties all these days together, that Christ is revealed as the Eternal Divine Word made flesh for the life of the world — meaning every single person of every time and space. The Triune God created every person; Christ came for every person, to give them the fullness of life. Christ came for us! That means, of course, that Christ came for you! That Christ came for me!

The Son of God did not come to earth for the most righteous people or even for the barely good people, but for all people, especially sinners (thank goodness! "*The healthy don't need a doctor, sick people do*"). Christ loves every person, even those the world despises.

Another way to express that these days are about the revelation of Jesus as the Christ, is to say that Christ is the Light of the world. Light is a common thread running through today's scriptures. Isaiah proclaims

that Jerusalem is called to be a light to the rest of the world. St. Paul proclaims that the mystery of salvation was made known to him by the light of divine revelation. And of course, the Gospel has the STAR. A light that revealed THE Light.

Another common theme today is that of gifts. Isaiah speaks of people willing even to cross the desert to bring gifts of gold and incense. Gold was not only beautiful, but also soft enough to be easily molded into jewelry, crowns and other ornamentations, as well as candle holders and eating utensils. Incense was burned to create a fragrant environment and mask the "aroma" of servants and visitors not so well-washed. (Remember there was not modern plumbing and baths.) And, of course, it was long used as an honor to God, smoke rising as prayers ascending to heaven. Gold and frankincense were both expensive, thus reserved for priests and royalty.

In the Magi's case, gold acknowledged the divinity of Christ and incense proclaimed his role as high priest. To these kingly and priestly gifts the Magi added myrrh. Myrrh was an oil used for anointing, particularly for burial. Myrrh proclaimed the humanity of Christ and foreshadowed his Passion and death. Jesus is not only king and priest, but he is also the sacrificial victim who offered his life to the Father for the reparation of sins.

The divinity of Christ is symbolized by the actions of the Magi. When they looked upon the Christ child, they prostrated (bowed, knelt, genuflected) themselves and did him homage and offered their gifts. They did not give gifts to Herod, recognizing the difference between the temporal king and the eternal kingship of the Lord, acknowledging the one worthy of praise.

Fr. Bob

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Catholic Men For Christ

Saturday, February 2

\$45 thru February 1 (\$50 at the door)

Visit catholicmenforchrist.org to register.

Catholic Women For Christ

Saturday, March 9

\$40 thru January 31 (\$50 at the door)

Visit catholicwomenforchrist.org to register.