8 Homily for the Solemnity of the Epiphany of our Lord Year A

8 January 2017

Is 60:1-6; Eph 3:2-3, 5-6; Mt 2:1-12

All of us have a fascination with stars but in two different ways. Firstly, some of us are captivated by their beauty sparkling in the dark canopy of the night which can arouse a feeling of wonder at their number and extent. Secondly, some of us like to steal a glance at the horoscope column in the newspaper, half humorously checking “what the stars hold for me.” The three Magi mentioned in today’s gospel story are not mere astrologers but men full of wisdom and insight who genuinely searched for the truth. So much so, in the history of the church there is a long standing tradition around these Magi. The Tradition of the Church by the 5th century gave them names with their places of origin like [Melchior](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melchior) from [Persia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persia), Gaspar Pandaperumal from India which was anglicized as [Caspar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casper_(name)), and finally the last one [Balthazar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balthazar_(given_name)) from Arabia. That is about their names and places of origin, but with regard to their number the Christians of the Eastern Church claim that twelve Magi paid homage to Jesus. However, what is important is not to delve into a debate on the historic verifiability of the incident but to discover the salvific truths that the feast of the Epiphany has to convey to us.

These Magi were open to the insights of the truth no matter from which culture, religion or social background that the truth emanates. Therefore, what they did was a bold step of faith. That is why they were bold enough to go and worship Jesus in an unexpected culmination; this unexpected culmination is unknown country, unknown culture, and the most non-descriptive of places for a saviour to be born, outside a city in a stable. Yet, because they were genuine seekers after truth, they could see in this vulnerable baby through the lenses of faith, God himself; they could see in this powerless baby through the lenses of faith the person who could inaugurate a new epoch in history. Thus they became the first non-Jewish people to kneel before that infant. These seekers of wisdom did not pay homage just becuase the star guided them to do so but because they realised that the stars did not have any control over this particular baby. In fact they came to realise that this baby is the very reason for the existence of stars; this baby is responsible for the movement of the stars; this baby is the light itself who gives light to all the stars. This new knowledge, this new truth, this novel encounter with this child changed their lives once and for all and their lives were never the same again, as the gospel tells us “they returned to their home country, by a different way”; their lives took a different turn.

Apart from Scripture and the Teaching of the Church, Jesus is revealed in our own day through the marvellous workings of nature, in the achievements of the human spirit, when the United Nations makes decisions for the betterment of humanity and when the Church enters into a dialogue with the world. Jesus was revealed to the Magi not in his majesty, power and glory but as an innocent powerless baby. So let us seek that powerless baby in our own vulnerability, powerlessness, alienation and in our own brokenness. And let that baby lead us to the truth.

[The Magi – another Christmas Poem](http://pieterstok.com/2011/11/26/the-magi-another-christmas-poem/) by [Pieter Stok](http://pieterstok.com/author/pstok/)

They laughed behind their hands

when we set off.

Our camels loaded.

What will it be?

A king?

A child?

A what?

We headed westward

with anticipation

and gifts.

The omen was clear

shining in the sky –

our compass and guide.

All of our studies seemed

true.

But

what if we found

no child

no king?

Could we return?

Our reputations a joke!

But “something”

was felt by us all

as we travelled

the long miles west.

We found a king

in Jerusalem.

Too old,

Too mean,

Too unwise.

We vowed not

to return this way.

We stargazed on

and came

to a man, woman and child.

No pretensions.

Humble

Joyfilled

poor

but ALIVE!

Then we knew!

We were sure!

The child, king, messiah

was found.

We could return home

with stories

with hope

… and our reputations.