

FAITH AND REASON

The Epiphany of the Lord: Today we celebrate the Epiphany or bright manifestation to the Gentiles, the day on which the Magi came from the East under the guidance of a star to worship Jesus. We are so impressed by the presence of the shepherds and the Magi from the Orient that we overlook those who are not there.

The King - Herod the Great is not there. This man, like all wicked men, did some good in his lifetime, however; he had one terrible flaw in his character, he was suspicious, insanely suspicious. He had always been suspicious and became increasingly so with age, thus earning the title "A murderous old man". Herod was deeply troubled, and with him all Jerusalem. The people knew very well what Herod was capable of doing in one of his moods. **The Pharisees** are not there. The Pharisees are in Jerusalem, studying the Law of Moses, They are so aware of their position and their knowledge, that they reduced the Law of Moses to a rigidity that suited their mentality. **The Sadducees** are not there. The Sadducees - the Priestly caste - who, having come under the influence of Greek culture, were very liberal and selective in their beliefs. They were the other end of the curve from the Pharisees.

One cannot fail to be deeply impressed by the shepherds. They knew the land, they knew how to care for sheep, they knew how to survive in very difficult circumstances - circumstances that were very demanding and frequently very dangerous: that is all they knew. Therefore, God gives them a direct revelation - the angels assure them of what is taking place, "The night, in the City of David, a Savior is born which is Christ the Lord". The Magi were from a highly developed culture. They saw nothing but a star - a natural object. They interpret this as a sign - a king, and something more than an ordinary king is to be born in the West country, perhaps in Palestine. Astrology was their science, and God in his Providence, in his love, used this to draw them to himself, to witness the birth of the Savior of the world - the King of Kings. If anyone ought to have known, the Scribes and Pharisees ought to have known. They knew the account of the shepherds, which they dismissed because it was too simple. They rejected the account of the Magi because they considered it too farfetched. The shepherds and the Magi, different in every conceivable way, have something in common. What is it that these Magi, these Priest-Kings, these aristocrats from the East, have in common with simple shepherds, nomads, that enables them to find their way to God? A simple heart.... an open mind, which enabled them to seek and embrace truth however It manifested itself, whatever the circumstances. How beautifully the beatitude applies to the shepherds and the Magi: "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God and they did! This openness of mind and heart is precisely what the Pharisees, Sadducees, King Herod did not have. They sought, accepted truth on their terms.

Our journey through life is very mysterious. The question is why? What is so mysterious about life? Animals do not find life mysterious, therefore why should we? Life for an animal is a matter of attaining food, comfort, survival. Is life different for us? The secular humanists say "no" obsessed as they are of having enough of everything. Secular humanism is a "wolf in sheep's clothing" a very covert enemy of religion. It professes half the Christian faith - love of neighbor, while it deliberately excludes love of God..... The central belief of Christianity is not survival, but God! of what use is survival if it does not mean survival after our life in this world. Of what use is survival if it does not include God - the giver of life? Our journey through life is mysterious because our destiny is mysterious. Our destiny is life with God for all eternity. Our journey's end is God! Failure to keep this in mind can only lead to confusion, unhappiness, which will result in spoiling our lives.

The Greek writer Herodotus (5th century B.C.) gives us some information about the Magi, in his history of the Persian Wars. The Magi he states were originally a Median tribe. The Medes were part of the Persian Empire, which they tried to overthrow and replace with the Medes. They failed, and from that time on, the Magi ceased to have any ambition for power or prestige and became a tribe of Priests. The Magi became in Persia what the Levites were in Israel: they became teachers and advisors to the Kings. No sacrifice could be offered unless one of the Magi was present. They became men of holiness and learning, skilled in philosophy, medicine, and the natural sciences. They were soothsayers and interpreters of dreams. In later times the word "Magus" (singular) came to mean little more than a fortune teller, a sorcerer, a magician, a charlatan. Nevertheless, it must be clearly stated that, at their best, the Magi were good and holy men who sought truth. The Magi are a reminder to those who seek the truth in the darkness. They are a warning, that the ability to reason, the accumulation of human knowledge, do not come with the guarantee that either will be properly used.

Like the great stone figures on Easter Island gazing out over the Pacific Ocean, the Magi stand out in Salvation, history, perennial reminders of a truth of the greatest importance ... i.e. If man refuses to respond to the call of God, to embark on the journey of a lifetime, to seek, to embrace truth, upon which depends his dignity, his destiny, and his most high calling... **Fr William C. Mooney**

Prayer of the Afflicted: We do not ask that you return our sight, but we do ask that you open the eyes of our society to discover the true values of justice and peace. We do not ask that you give us back our legs, but we do ask that our brother's walk united toward you. We do not ask that you restore our hands, but we do ask that you teach us all that there is more joy in giving than in receiving that brotherhood is sharing everything as you have done with us. We do not ask that you raise us from our beds. But we do ask for the strength to touch the hearts of those who have given up, who do not believe in the light..... **Sr Patricia Lowery. M.M.**

Why Listening is a Part of Life: Man ought not to try to be self-sufficient, and he must have the humility to learn, to accept something "incline thy head". He must find a way to follow the call into listening. And listening means not just giving ear to whatever is going the rounds, but also listening to the depths, or to the heights, since what the Master says is basically the application of Holy Scripture, the application of this fundamental rule of human existence.... We can see in the Rule of St Benedict how nothing that is truly human ever becomes old-fashioned. Anything that comes from the depths of our being remains a counsel of life that is always relevant. Perhaps we are beginning to see that freedom from work, that freedom, which is gift of God's service, stepping outside the mentality of mere achievement is what we need. That listening - for the service of God is to a great extent a matter of letting God in and of listening - must be part of life. Just as discipline and right measure and order belong together, just like obedience and freedom, so equally tolerating each other in the spirit of faith, is not merely a basic rule for any monastic community, but all these things are, when you come down to it, essential elements for building any and every society. This, a rule that springs from what is really human, and it was able to formulate what was truly human because it looked out and listened beyond what is human and perceived the divine. Man becomes really human when he is touched by God... **Pope Benedict XVI**

Prayer can truly change your life, for it turns your attention away from yourself and directs your mind and heart to God. If we look only at ourselves, we give way to sadness and discouragement. But if we keep our eyes fixed on the Lord, our hearts are filled with hope, our minds washed in the light of truth, and we come to know the fullness of the Gospel with all its promise of life... **St. John Paul II**

A Thought For the Day

Sunday	The truth is like a lion; you don't have to defend it. Let it loose; it will defend itself.
Monday	Grace is nothing else but a certain beginning of glory within us.
Tuesday	Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.
Wednesday	Miracles are not contrary to nature but only contrary to what we know about nature.
Thursday	One cannot desire freedom from the Cross when one is especially chosen for the Cross.
Friday	The nation doesn't simply need what we have. It needs what we are.
Saturday	Once you have surrendered yourself, you make yourself receptive. In receiving from god, you are perfected and completed.

A New You in Christ: The Christian way is different, harder and easier. Christ says: Give me all. I do not want so much of your time, and so much of your money, and so much of your work: I want you. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half measures are any good. I do not want to cut off a branch here and branch there, want to have the whole tree cut down. I do not want to drill a tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked - the whole outfit, and I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you myself: my own will shall become yours.....**C.S Lewis.**

The Marvelous Power of Scripture: All though the Bible can easily be read by all, it hides away the majesty of it secrets within its profound meanings. It stops to all through a great plainness of language and simplicity of style. Yet it demands the close attention of the most serious-minded readers. In this way, it receives everyone into its wide embrace. It stands upon the height of its authority. Yet it has allured multitudes into its bosom by a holy kind of lowliness. How wonderful is the depth of your Scriptures, Lord! Their surface lies before us, inviting the little ones; and yet what a marvelous deepness, my God, a marvelous deepness. How awesome to look into it - an awe of honor, and a trembling of love. Lord, I have known no other book so destructive of pride, so powerful against your enemies and against those who defend themselves by trying to justify themselves, refusing to be reconciled to you. Lord I know no other words so pure, so capable of persuading me to confess my sins to you, and to make my neck submissive to your yoke, and to serve you with no reward other than yourself. Let me understand these words, good Father. Grant this to me, for I am submitted to your words, and you have established them for the sake of those who are submitted to them...**St Augustine of Hippo**

Immaculate Mother of God, Queen of the Apostles, we know that God's commandment of love and our vocation to follow Jesus Christ impels us to cooperate in the mission of the Church. Realizing our own weakness, we entrust the renewal of our personal lives and our apostolate to your intercession. We are confident that through God's mercy and the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, you, who are our Mother, will obtain the strength of the Holy Spirit as you obtained it for the community of the apostles gathered in the upper room. Therefore, relying on your maternal intercession, we resolve from this moment to devote our talents, learning, material resources, our health, sickness and trials, and every gift of nature and grace, for the greater glory of God and the salvation of all. We wish to carry on those activities which especially promote the catholic apostolate for the revival of faith and love of the people of God and so bring all men and women into the faith of Jesus Christ. And if a time should come when we have nothing more to offer serviceable to this end, we will never cease to pray that there will be one-fold and one shepherd Jesus Christ. In this way, we hope to enjoy the results of the apostolate of Jesus Christ for all eternity. **Amen**

In His Will is Our Peace
Fr. William C. Mooney

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