

“Epiphany”

As we are in the silent part of Christmas, we celebrate the visit of the Magi. The three kings who came from the East after seeing a star that told them the Messiah was born. The three wise men came with one mind, to come and adore and offer the new born King gifts that told a story.

Balak, king of Moab out of fear on seeing how numerous the Israelites were, sent for Balaam who practiced divination at Pethor on the river, in the land of the Ammonites so he could curse Israel for him. But God told Balaam not to curse Israel for God had blessed them. Instead of a curse, God put a blessing in Balaam’s mouth and he predicted that **“A star shall advance from Jacob, and a scepter shall rise from Israel”** (Number 24:17b). According to early Christians, the star refers to Jesus and not the star the Magi saw.

The three Magi from the East knew about the prediction of Balaam and when it came to pass, they set out for Judea to find the Messiah. Not knowing exactly where the King of the Jews would be born, they were led to Jerusalem to Herod. Herod who knew about the prophecy probably thought it was about his lineage. He was disturbed by the news and wanted to kill the King of the Jews. It was at Jerusalem that they found out the Child would be born in Bethlehem, which means the house of bread.

At the birth of Jesus, we saw that an Angel appeared to Shepherds who came to worship the new born King. The Shepherds represented the Jews who were the first to be called to believe in the Savior for their salvation. The three Magi who were Gentiles were the next people God manifested His glory to by bringing them to the Child so they could worship Him. They in turn offered Him gifts of gold pointing to His Kingship, frankincense which point’s to the Child’s divinity, and Myrrh pointing to His death for our redemption.

By revealing the birth of the Messiah to the Magi, God revealed His plan that people of every nation who believe in Him would be saved; fulfilling the promise He made to Abraham that he would be the father of many nations and not just the Jews as they thought.

Jesus made clear this offer of salvation to all when before His ascension, He told His disciples **“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you”** (Matt 28:19-20).

The question we have is, why would the Magi leave their countries, their people, and their wealth to undergo a difficult and dangerous journey of probably several hundreds of miles in search of the Messiah? It must be because of their great faith that the Messiah would be born in Judea.

As we must notice, they kept their faith and did not despair when the star they were following disappeared in Jerusalem. They were so sure when they got to Jerusalem that they asked where the Messiah was born and not if He was born.

The story of the Magi teaches us that we too who have the assurance of His birth should put some energy and time into finding Him in our hearts.

Finding Jesus is not automatic because we are Christians; or because we have heard about Him. Finding Him means holding on to Him by obeying what He passed on to His Church to teach us. It means entering through the narrow gate and ignoring the wide road that leads to condemnation. It means picking up our crosses especially when we are suffering and follow Him, just as He picked up His cross for us.

As we are still in the Christmas season, other questions we should ask ourselves are, is Jesus really my King? When we come to worship Him do we really bring our presence as gifts to Him as St. Paul said **“Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect (Romans 12:1-2).**

As we come to receive Him, let us ask Him to give us the strength, courage and grace to do His holy will every single day of our lives.