

Solemnity of the Epiphany
January 6, 2013

The challenge and promise of Peace in our Homes

Readings: Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3,5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

It may well be true that few accounts in the Gospels are as awe inspiring, magnificent or captivating as today's. Certainly, this is not a miracle account complete with healings or the casting out of demons. The earth neither shudders nor shakes. Rather, three mysterious men from the East bearing gifts and traveling by means of a star, come upon the Savior of the world and worship in humility. To add to the mysterious nature, they are warned in a dream not to return to King Herod, and thus they depart for their homes by another route.

In this most ancient feast dating to the beginning of the 3rd century, celebrating together three great events of Christ's manifestation: (1) his Baptism in the Jordan, (2) the miracle at the wedding feast of Cana, and (3) the coming of the Wise Men to Bethlehem. Our attention today is drawn to the divine dignity of the Christ Child, who is the Messianic king of the world. The universality of God's salvation in the New Jerusalem, which is the Church, finds expression in our second reading, in which St. Paul proclaims: "the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and co-partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel."

Leaving aside the mystery about the exact identities and origin of the Magi, even the astronomy involved, we are able to see the spiritual significance of the event known as Epiphany. God has been made manifest in the person of the Word made flesh, and it has now fallen to us to continue to make his name known and loved in the world. Can we see in Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar a reflection of humanity even in the 21st century? In the midst of all that we may not know, in the midst of all the uncertainty in our world, could these kings serve to teach us anything about peace?

For one thing, they teach us about peace, for they came in peace, and from a distant land and culture. The birth of the Savior was the impetus for transcending all differences of religion or culture. This provided an early glimpse into the reality of Christ's mission, a mission universal in scope. The desire for peace among peoples is etched in the hearts of all.

In his World Day for Peace message last week, the Holy Father spoke of this desire: "In every person the desire for peace is an essential aspiration which coincides in a certain way with the desire for a full, happy and successful human life."¹ He went on to note that the desire for peace "is part of God's plan for mankind. Man is made for the peace which is God's gift."²

Some of our senior parishioners could vividly remember drills in the 1950's when you were in school that had you hiding under desks in case of a nuclear attack. Those of us of the baby boom generation (I am at the tail end of that grouping) can easily remember eerie scenes from May Day Parades, complete with tanks and thousands of soldiers marching across Red Square. Peace seemed to be almost impossible.

It is imperative that we remain a people motivated by hope, truly seeing that we are part of one human family of God, despite the many serious challenges we face. No, I do not speak of a one-world order, not by any stretch. Rather, I speak of first and foremost fostering a deep interior peace within our souls. Only then will we be in a position to foster peace beyond. This begins in the home. If our home can be a place of peace, notwithstanding the normal everyday bumps along the road that all families experience, we will have set off on the right path.

¹ MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE WORLD DAY OF PEACE, January 1, 2013, paragraph#1.

² Ibid.

I heartily encourage every household to make use of the Epiphany kits available by the exits today, for it is a visible reminder that the doors of our homes are marked under the protection of Jesus Christ. He will bring peace to our homes, and He will bless us abundantly in this New Year.

When I pray for members of this parish, there is no prayer closer to my heart than to pray for tranquility in your homes. Quite simply, that dominates my prayers for you because it is so foundational to our lives as Christians. When necessary, God can soften our hardened hearts, allowing us to have a fresh start with each other, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, and interior peace within the hearts of those living single in the Lord.

There are many gifts I see present in this parish: gifts of faith, respect for life, musical talents put to service for others, generosity in service at the altar, the lectern or caring for this magnificent building, generous service to the poor and homeless during the coldest month of the year. Like the Magi, we are invited to lay down these gifts before the Prince of Peace, begging of Him guidance for our lives. These lives, lived in peace, enable us to be a light to the nations, a light to our classmates at school, our colleagues at work, and to each other.

“The Wise Men followed the star, and thus came to Jesus, to the great Light which enlightens everyone coming into this world (cf. *Jn* 1:9). As pilgrims of faith, the Wise Men themselves became stars shining in the firmament of history and they show us the way.”³ In particular, they show us the way to peace. Let us embrace this challenge and promise of peace, and in so doing, do our part to honor the Newborn King.

³ Pope Benedict XVI, Homily for Epiphany, 6 January 2013, Rome