

Homily. Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. 4/5 January 2020.

The Wise Men, otherwise known as the Magi, have been understood from the very earliest of Christian times as representing the call and journey to faith of the gentile, non-Jewish people; of people like ourselves. Because our faith has an historical basis Jesus Christ had to be born to a specific family, living, learning and ministering in a particular time and culture, which in His case was First century Jewish and Galilean life.

Yet, as God's Son, He was sent as a gift to the whole world, the incarnate embodiment of God's Good-News for all peoples, as the Angels of Christmas announced to the shepherds. The journey to Bethlehem and the homage of the Magi from their Eastern pagan lands reveals that this Jewish child was not only intended for one family or for a select few, but for the many. In fact, this story reveals that He was given to all who will read and heed the signs of God and come to belief in the Lord. The Wise Men in this story stand in for us, for the journey that we, and many millions of other people, have made and are still making to this day.

They point us in the right direction to not only begin but to also complete this journey of faith that we are making through life. They point is to travelling with wisdom and openness to the signs that God offers to us along the way. The Magi saw the New King's Star as it rose even before He was born. They read this sign, given in a way that they could understand, leaving everything behind so as to follow it to its destination.

Naturally, their journey wasn't without its costs, but they chose to travel the arid deserts in faith keeping the Divine sign of the Star always before them, supporting each other as they went. Company, companionship, a community, which for us is the Church, is absolutely vital if we're going to successfully make our own journey of faith today. King Herod, standing for all who are powerful, entitled and manipulative, sought to use these Wise Travellers in his murderous purge of the children of Bethlehem. Once again, they read God's signs to them, this time revealed through a dream, avoiding Jerusalem and Herod when they made their way home.

The Magi's journey teaches us not only of the need for companionship on our faith journey, but also to draw upon our collective wisdom as we seek to interpret the signs God is continually giving to us. Our God is the God of all Truth, and for God the facts are always friendly. Not always so is it for us, sadly. We have a tendency to avoid facts and realities that we fear as unpleasant and find difficult and challenging. Had the Wise Men done this they might never have left their homes, or worse still, they may have ignored their dream so becoming pawns in Herod's dark schemes.

The signs of our times are as challenging today as they've ever been, signs of great upheaval and change in the world's climate, in politics, law, economics, our family and social systems and in values long held dear. Ignoring these signs isn't an option that's faithful to God or to the witness and journey of the Magi. Reading these signs rightly and responding to them in faith is what's now being asked of us.

The Epiphany reminds us of these tools needed for our successful journey of faith towards the Lord and His Light. Setting out together this year then, as God's pilgrim people we commit ourselves to listening deeply to God Word, to welcoming the friendly facts God lays before us and to drawing upon the wisdom of each other and of our Church so that we can rightly read the signs of these times in which we find ourselves. In doing these simple things we'll find the most generous response that's relevant to our times, a response truly faithful to the Lord of our Salvation who has come to bring us hope and guide us on the way of peace.