

Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD / A

8 JANUARY 2023

‘Where is the infant king of the Jews?’ they asked. ‘We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage.’ When King Herod heard this he was perturbed, and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, and enquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ‘At Bethlehem in Judaea,’ they told him ‘for this is what the prophet wrote:

And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
you are by no means least among the leaders
of Judah,

for out of you will come a leader
who will shepherd my people Israel.’

Then Herod summoned the wise men to see him privately. He asked them the exact date on which the star had appeared, and sent them on to Bethlehem. ‘Go and find out all about the child,’ he said ‘and when you have found him, let me know, so that I too may go and do him homage.’ Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising; it went forward and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. But they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way.

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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QUEST FOR TRUTH

Truth, like greatness, can come to us in a variety of ways. Some search for it and others have it thrust upon them. What brought the wise men from afar on such a journey of great adventure, risk and discovery? They were indeed people seeking the truth, and even more importantly, they were open to the new and unexpected ways in which that truth came to them. As they brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, the vision of that great prophet Isaiah is fulfilled. He knew that the call that Israel had received was one destined to be shared by all humanity, united in its worship of the living God. As a reward for their tireless quest for the truth, the wise men receive the gift of knowledge and understanding. It is not so with Herod. The truth is most unwelcome and is thrust upon him. The message of the astrologers from the East is decidedly unsettling for Herod: if this child is the newborn king of the Jews what will be Herod’s status in the future?

Paul too has travelled, searched and wrestled with the truth that God wishes to be proclaimed to the world. It is a message that has the power to both liberate and discomfort. Gentiles who accept Jesus now share the same promises and inheritance as the people of Israel. They are part of the same body. Jewish Christians had to deal with the fact that what had been their exclusive privilege was now extended to the Gentiles and that this too was part of God’s plan to be graciously accepted.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Isa 60:1-6

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

The glory of the Lord shines upon you.

Arise, shine out Jerusalem, for your light has come, the glory of the Lord is rising on you, though night still covers the earth and darkness the peoples. Above you the Lord now rises and above you his glory appears. The nations come to your light and kings to your dawning brightness. Lift up your eyes and look round: all are assembling and coming towards you, your sons from far away and daughters being tenderly carried. At this sight you will grow radiant, your heart throbbing and full; since the riches of the sea will flow to you; the wealth of the nations come to you; camels in throngs will cover you, and dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; everyone in Sheba will come, bringing gold and incense and singing the praise of the Lord.

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 71:1-2, 7-13 R.v.11

R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

1. O God, give your judgement to the king,/ to a king’s son your justice,/ that he may judge your people in justice/ and your poor in right judgement. **R.**
2. In his days justice shall flourish/ and peace till the moon fails./ He shall rule from sea to sea,/ from the Great River to earth’s bounds. **R.**
3. The kings of Tarshish and the sea coasts/ shall pay him tribute./ The kings of Sheba and Seba/ shall bring him gifts./ Before him all kings shall fall prostrate,/ all nations shall serve him. **R.**
4. For he shall save the poor when they cry/ and the needy who are helpless./ He will have pity on the weak/ and save the lives of the poor. **R.**



SECOND READING

Eph 3:2-3, 5-6

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians.

The revelation means that pagans now share the same inheritance, that they are parts of the same body.

You have probably heard how I have been entrusted by God with the grace he meant for you, and that it was by a revelation that I was given the knowledge of the mystery. This mystery that has now been revealed through the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets was unknown to any men in past generations; it means that pagans now share the same inheritance, that they are parts of the same body, and that the same promise has been made to them, in Christ Jesus, through the gospel.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Mt 2:2

Alleluia, alleluia! We have seen his star in the East; and have come to adore the Lord. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mt 2:1-12

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

We have come from the East to worship the King.

After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of King Herod, some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east.