

**The Feast of the Epiphany**

**To celebrate this feast**

**We need to know just what the Epiphany is**

**An epiphany is a manifestation**

**It is making something visible or apparent**

**Something that was hidden**

**It may mean that something we see is given new meaning**

**In this light, we look at the birth of Jesus**

**Not as a normal, ordinary child**

**But as the Son of God as well as the Son of Mary**

**This was the Epiphany to the kings**

**To Herod**

**To the shepherds**

**And to us today**

**Our first reading speaks of the splendor of Jerusalem**

**Your light will come**

**It speaks of Jerusalem being fulfilled**

**This is more than the light of a new day**

**It is the light of a new era**

**A time of divine glory**

**Jerusalem is blessed because this light will shine on her first**

**But it is not for her alone**

**The other nations will witness her glory**

**She is to be a beacon to them**

**Israel has been blessed in a special way by God**

**But his blessing is not for her alone**

**Through her, God desires to bestow His blessings to the entire world**

**To Gentiles as well as to Jews**

**St Paul speaks of this as well**

**Paul had an epiphany as well**

**The mystery of salvation**

**It was given to Paul by a revelation**

**That the Gentiles are co-partners**

**Coheirs and members of the one body**

**Equal with the Jews in the order of salvation**

**This was a startling revelation at the time**

**What qualifies one as an heir is no longer a family tree**

**The Body of Christ is not equivalent with the descendants of Abraham**

**Being united in Christ is what will bring salvation**

**And who is this Christ?**

**He is the son of Mary**

**The one the wise men from the East came to honor**

**This feast of the Epiphany points to the universality of Christ**

**We don't know who these wise men are**

**We think of them as kings**

**But there is no proof**

**We also think there were three of them**

**We even have name handed down in tradition**

**Caspar, Balthazar and Melchior**

**But again, no proof**

**Scripture tells us there were three gifts**

**Not three Magi**

**But we do know God made a point with the Magi**

**They were astrologers**

**They would have been learned, intelligent men**

**From the ruling class**

**From the East**

**That is, they were pagans**

**But God revealed to them the birth of a king**

**He spoke to them in a language they understood**

**Through the stars**

**But they did not understand the Jewish faith**

**So they came to the city of king Herod**

**If there was a newborn king**

**It would be natural for him to be a child of Herod's family**

**But they knew nothing about a new king**

**In fact, word of this new king shook the entire establishment**

**So they investigated**

**The chief priests said the child would be born in Bethlehem**

**So they set off**

**And again the star leads them to the place the child was**

**They prostrated themselves and did him homage**

**They did not honor Herod this way**

**Again, God spoke to their hearts**

**They recognized in this child**

**His true identity**

**Not in external appearance**

**But in the epiphany God gave to them**

**So we could also come and worship this child**

**These wise men come from the East**

**From nowhere and from anywhere**

**They come to acknowledge this child as a king**

**Even more, as God**

**And they returned by another way**

**For Blessed Fulton Sheen**

**This is a key line in this scripture**

**It is more than the Magi outwitting Herod**

**In a certain way, it is Jesus outwitting us**

**Because when we come to Christ**

**And we begin to see clearly who this child is**

**Yes, we offer our gifts**

**Whatever they may be**

**But the real gift is received by us**

**The gift of the Epiphany**

**The realization of who this child is**

**And that changes us**

**We cannot leave the same as we came**

**The Magi returned by another route**

**And everything was changed for them**

**Yes, they went back to their own country**

**But they went to a brand new country at the same time**

**We need the Epiphany**

**In many countries this feast is called the Little Christmas**

**A time for gifts to be offered and received**

**In many cultures, this feast is three in one**

**It is a feast of the Magi**

**The feast of the baptism of the Lord**

**And the feast of the miracle of Cana**

**Because all of these reveal a new aspect of whom Christ is**

**But for the Roman church (Here's a little preview)**

**We celebrate all of these on consecutive weekends**

**Next week is the Baptism of the Lord**

**And the following week will be the wedding at Cana**

**The Epiphany keeps us grounded in the true meaning of Christmas**

**We can get all caught up in the secular meaning**

**It can become a sentimental time**

**With all the Christmas cards and gifts**

**With the parties and family gatherings**

**We focus on the starry night in Bethlehem**

**A mom and dad with a little child**

**Surrounded by the angels, singing glory to God in the highest**

**All the hymns we sing**

**All of these things are great and beautiful things**

**But they need to be grounded**

**If they become the reason we celebrate**

**We empty Christmas of Christ**

**And it becomes a sentimental time based on personal opinions**

**And the enemies of Christianity have another weapon to use  
against us**

**The Magi show us another way**

**They show that faith and reason are not opposed**

**Nor are they opposite poles in our lives**

**The Magi, guided by the Holy Spirit  
Used their knowledge of the stars to recognize a deeper meaning  
Even though they were pagans  
They studied Jewish Scripture  
And were familiar with the expectation of a new king  
They journeyed to the baby in Bethlehem  
And they were given faith  
And in response, they offered their gifts  
Things that tied them to this world  
And they did him homage  
This is how our own faith works with reason  
One leading the other  
Both advancing together  
So we can recognize him for who he is  
King of kings  
LORD of lords  
And we offer our gifts  
Emptying ourselves of things  
So we can be filled with His Love  
And leave here today by another way**