

January 5, 2019 (Epiphany)

Is 60:1-6; Eph 3:2-3a,5-6; Mt 2:1-12

We heard the prophet say today: *Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you.* This feast of the Epiphany calls us to realize the light that has come into the world. We can look today at two different responses to that light. First is our own ability to recognize and acknowledge the light, the second is our duty to spread that light to a world that is often covered in darkness. The darkness of the world we can see without much trouble - it is the light that can be harder to find, and which should be our focus.

The prophet is, of course, speaking of the coming into the world of Jesus Christ. The obvious connection to the nativity can be seen later in the passage where the prophet speaks that *all from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.* Not too hard to know who comes from afar bearing gold and frankincense - and who they come to bring it to. They come bringing these gifts to a small baby newly born in a manger in Bethlehem - who actually is the light of the world. They came seeking out Jesus because they had a sense of who this was. They bring gold to acclaim him as king, frankincense to praise him as God, and Myrrh to symbolize his humanity and the sacrifice he would suffer for us all. They point to a kingly God-man who is the promised savior - the one whom the prophets said will bring light into the world to chase away the darkness.

But what does that mean to bring the light, and what does it mean for us? First, as I said before, we have to recognize the light. We have to recognize that the evil, cruel, unjust, and devious things that we hear about on the news all the time are not the way God wants it to be. These dark areas of our world have less of the light. We must realize that what we see so often is the world in the darkness of the absence of God. So many parts of our world work to push God to the side, to find alternatives to the truth - alternative ways to spend our time and resources besides worshiping God and caring for our neighbor. These same forces claim that things are from God that are not of God, they place values of the world over our understanding of God coming to us from the Apostles. All of this basically requests God to step back - and where the light retreats darkness begins to grow. If we are to be in the light we have to recognize the light..

There are so many people claiming to speak for God - but there is a voice that has come down through the millennia that points out the true light like the star was a guided the wise men.

We heard of this light in the second reading: *It was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.* I had a long conversation with a young lady at the Mall on my day off. She works there and we've spoken several times. She was watching many different videos on You Tube and all the people claiming to be speaking for the light and truth of God, and this left her confused a bit. These people and others she has heard contradict each other, or they say what someone would want to hear, or they describe what they got themselves from their own personal interpretation - attributing this to the Holy Spirit. We as Catholics can be less confused - we recognize that the Spirit has been speaking through the prophets and Apostles and we have a firm Tradition to hold on to to guide us in our quest for Jesus and the truth. It guides us as sure as that star guided the wise men to the real Christ child in a city filled with many crying babies.

The second question from before is what are we supposed to do when we find the true light of Christ? Oddly, Herod gives so clue to this in the Gospel. Although his intentions were evil, what he tells the wise men to do is in line with what we should do. He says: *Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage.* We should do that first thing and search diligently for the true Christ child - following the light of the star and following that truth in our own lives - and then we should point him out so that others can do him homage. The light is supposed to be shared. It is supposed to light us up so that we become beacons that draw others to it. As the prophet said in our first reading: *Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you.*

My friend at the Mall is looking for the light - but following several stars. She is confused by so many stars and so many other voices that want to be found. I have been blessed to see in the clear, logical, and spirit-filled teaching of the Church a star to guide me. I have tried to share that light with her. She has been drawn away from religions that do not recognize Jesus - yet she is unsatisfied with multiple opinions in religion that contradict. There is a star that can guide us on the way to the truth of Jesus. Once seeing the clarity of it, once we apply it in our own lives, then we can heed God's call to reflect that light elsewhere. I pray that one day that light may fill the world with the truth, and the darkness of evil, injustice, hatred, fear, war, and hatred may be driven out by the light of that child who is our king, and God, and reconciling sacrifice. How privileged it is to seek, and to find, and to share!