

## **Information with Wisdom**

Epiphany (Year B)

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In his document *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis notes that today we have a problem which he calls ‘information without wisdom.’ By this he means we have the ability to do many things with the knowledge we have, especially technologically, but we no longer use it to live in meaningful ways. He writes, “the flood of information at our fingertips does not make for greater wisdom. Wisdom is not born of quick searches on the internet nor is it a mass of unverified data.” (50) Quite bluntly, he says, “true wisdom demands an encounter with reality,” (47) implying that we are somehow out of touch with reality. As a whole, we live in our own little worlds that are not always open to the bigger questions of life. These are worlds of information without wisdom.

Today’s feast of the Epiphany highlights the arrival in Bethlehem of the magi, also known as the wisemen. Unlike our situation today, these wisemen from the East had information and wisdom, thus their name. As for information, they knew that the newborn king of the Jews was born, they had a star to lead them, and they learned some additional details about the location of the child through their conversation with King Herod. All of these pieces of information were undoubtedly helpful, but incomplete in themselves. To find the baby Jesus, they also had to have wisdom, which included the ability to set out on a long journey without knowing the exact destination, the hunch that King Herod had evil intentions and could not be trusted, the insight to bring along with them symbolic gifts to give to the newborn king, and the flexibility of returning home by another route. It was only through both

information and wisdom that they could find the baby Jesus, gave him fitting homage, and return to their home country safely.

Recovering wisdom to complement our information is an essential task in our times. As suggested by Pope Francis, a good starting point is for us to encounter reality. This involves looking at the world around us as it really is, not how it once was, how we think it is, or how we want it to be. It involves acknowledging the image of God in the people around us, even if they look and act differently than what we are used to. It involves reflecting on current events in light of the Gospel. Wisdom grows whenever we can face reality and respond to it in ways that address the bigger questions of life. Whenever we are willing to leave our own little worlds of mere information, we encounter reality. As Christians, this is where we find wisdom because this is where we find God.

*As we continue to gain information, we need to also grow in wisdom.*

Do I value wisdom as much as I value knowledge and information?

Growing in wisdom isn't an easy path. Wisdom cannot be taught. It has to be experienced, received by the Holy Spirit, and modeled for us through wisemen and wisewomen. On this feast of Epiphany, let us pray that like the wisemen, we may have information with wisdom.