

January 8, 2023

Cycle A – The Epiphany of the Lord

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalms: 72: 1-2, 7-8,
10-11, 12-13

Ephesians 3:2-6

Matthew 2:1-12

Notes from Bishop Peter

Theme: When we seek the Lord, he always draws us close to himself. “Listen. I am standing at the door knocking. If you hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and eat with you and you with me.” (Rev. III:20)

1. The Magi gave gifts to Jesus that represented the gift of themselves to him.
 - a. Gold, frankincense (from the sap of a tree in Arabia) and myrrh (also from the sap of a tree that is turned into a sort of oil)
 - Gold, Jesus as King, frankincense, his divinity, myrrh, his burial.
 - They adore the newborn king, reminding us of the first Great Commandment of the Jews and now ours too: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart...”
2. The fact that the Magi came from such a long distance to find Jesus shows what Saint Augustine said in the 4th Century: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”
 - a. That’s one of the reasons we come to him. That’s why people become tired of material pleasures from sources like pornography, the hook-up culture and the recreational use of drugs. They desire something more substantial, more profound. All these material things can never satisfy the cravings of the human heart – that explains in part why so many people turn to various kinds of spirituality. Only Jesus will ultimately satisfy their thirst.

3. King Herod is threatened! He fears that the new-born king will take away his power and position.
 - a. Like those today in positions of authority who feel threatened when a younger man or woman with talent is promoted to work under them. Rather, they should encourage them and count on their work and advice and delegate authority to them for the good of the enterprise, instead of thinking of themselves!
4. Saint Augustine knew he needed more in life. "Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, O Beauty ever new. Late have I loved you. You called, shouted, broke through my deafness; you flared, blazed, you banished my blindness; you lavished your fragrance on me. I breathed it in and now I pant for you; I tasted you, and I hunger and thirst for you; you touched me, and I burned for your peace."
5. Where should we seek the Lord? First, where he says he is: "I was hungry and you gave me food, thirsty and you gave me drink... Whatsoever you do for the least of my sisters and brothers, you do to me." Matthew 25
 - a. In the aging parents you care for, in a child with disabilities, in people who come to a local soup kitchen such as the House of Bread in Hartford.
 - b. In vulnerable immigrants: Today the Catholic Church in the USA begins a week dedicated to the support and welcome of migrants or immigrants:
 - * What does our church teach about how immigrants should be treated? And the children of immigrants and in particular Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders? In the Bible we find the following: "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Ex 22:21); "Love the foreigner for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt" (Deut 10:19). + "I was a stranger (foreigner) and you took me in." (Matthew 25) Yes, there is chaos at our southern border and it is imperative that our legislators address this problem effectively, for the protection of our borders and for the good of those suffering from gang violence (Haiti) and other forms of oppression (Cuba).

6. We also should bring Christ to others by the way we live and treat them. This means to live the Mystery of the Visitation. Mary, pregnant with Jesus, visits her cousin Elizabeth and when they greet, “the child in Elizabeth’s womb leaps for joy.”
 - a. Similarly, we are Christ-bearers (Christophers) because He lives in us. Each of us should ask how we can be Christ to the people we live and work with. How can we support them and lessen their burdens and pain? How can we make them happy? (Bob Hope and the millions of people who were inspired by his humor)
7. We thank Jesus for letting us find him and for his invitation to be Christ to one another, especially the most vulnerable. May Jesus in the Eucharist we celebrate and receive help us to represent him with ever greater authenticity.

Amen.