

Epiphany

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Date: 06 January 2021

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[0 : 00] When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King. Worship this evening a gospel lesson in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

How many of us know the definition of the word epiphany? Not everyone does. For example, when I first became an Anglican in 1994, even after being raised Roman Catholic, I didn't know its meaning.

It took about a month in a parish named Church of the Epiphany before I came across the propers in their prayer book and learned the meaning. If you've seen it in the prayer book, there's a little heading there and it says, The Epiphany, or the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

The word epiphany means manifestation or realization. You know, we talk about, oh, he had an epiphany. And we realize something that he didn't realize before. What we celebrate this evening is the time when it was manifested for the Gentile Magi, and they realized that Jesus is the Christ foretold in the scriptures.

Did you know that? As I said, there was a time when I didn't. Knowing the lexical and ecclesial definitions of the word epiphany is a good thing.

[1 : 29] But we also need to know a more practical definition of this word. We need to know how to apply the epiphany to our lives. The Gospel lesson tells us the practical meaning of the epiphany has two parts.

The first part is revelation. God used two means of revelation to lead the Magi to Christ. He used the prophecies of the Hebrew scriptures, what we would call the Old Testament, and he used the star.

The first part here, then, is revelation. God used those two means of revelation to lead the Magi to Christ. He used those prophecies.

And as the Gospel lesson states, the Magi asked Herod, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east. And hearing this, Herod consulted with the chief priests and the scribes to know where the Christ was to be born.

And they quoted Micah chapter 5, verse 2 to him. And though Bethlehem and the land of Judah are not the least among the princes of Judah, for out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel.

[2 : 47] The Magi were not kings, as we think of it, but were astrologers slash philosophers from Persia who studied the Hebrew scriptures, which had been brought to their land during Judah's captivity in Babylon.

The Magi believed those prophecies. And so they followed the star with great determination and diligence. They traveled that distance in order to see the one they had longed to see, the child king, the Messiah whom the Hebrew prophets proclaimed would come.

The scriptures and the star were God's appointed instruments to tell the Magi that Christ had been born into the world and to lead them to where they could find him.

So revelation is that first part of the message of the Epiphany. The second part of this message is seen in what the Magi did once they laid their eyes upon Jesus.

The Gospel lesson states, Worship then is the second part of this practical meaning of the Epiphany.

[4 : 05] Though Jesus was not in a palace where you would expect the king to be, it did not matter to the Magi. God through the scriptures had revealed to them that Jesus was the promised Messiah king.

And the star had led them to this simple house in Bethlehem. So where Jesus was is where they were going to worship him. And that's what they did.

Revelation and worship are what we need to know about this Feast of the Epiphany. Revelation and worship is what the Holy Spirit wants us to emulate on this feast and through this season, which this year has three Sundays to it.

Epiphany is a time for us to search our hearts and search our lives to see if we are making full use of the means of revelation and worship God has provided us.

It is a time for us to discern whether we are giving our due diligence to knowing and giving proper homage and worship to our incarnate Lord and King.

[5 : 15] Since the day of Pentecost, God has provided his people the means of revelation necessary and the means of worship necessary to not just learn this important lesson, but to put it in practice into our lives.

In the Epistle of St. Paul states, God provided those means to the church where salvation is ecclesial and not just individual. It is to the church God has given the fullness of his revelation in the scriptures and by his spirit given their proper interpretation and the patristic writers and the seven ecumenical councils.

And it is to the church God has given the mass whereby the spirit leads us to offer proper worship and the reception of Christ's body and blood. The mass brings revelation and worship together in one place.

It brings the meaning of the epiphany together in one place. Tonight, in this place. In the mass we hear with our ears and hopefully we hear in our hearts God's revelation and the text of the appointed lessons and the creed and at least hopefully in the sermon.

In the mass we participate in the supreme act of worship, the only act of worship that Jesus commanded that we do, the Holy Eucharist.

[6 : 49] Each part of the mass fulfills the message of the epiphany for all who, by any effort of faith, if they are willing to hear, to see, and to assist.

In the mass, God has given his church the means by which we can actively participate in the meaning of the epiphany.

So my brothers and sisters, let us use what God has given us to more deeply learn the meaning of the epiphany. Let us take hold of revelation and worship and then let us live it.

Not just here during mass, but out in the world, in our day-to-day lives. There are many who may know there is a God, but do not know him through Jesus Christ.

We can reveal Christ to them. And there are others who know Jesus, but do not know the proper way to worship him, the way Jesus says we are to worship him.

[7 : 55] We can invite them here, and we can show them. By God's grace, and through this great feast and season of the epiphany given to the church, you and I know these things.

And in knowing them, we are to express our thanks and our faith by living them and then declaring them before the world. So let us not merely know in our heads what the word epiphany means.

Let us live and let us show that meaning and show it so that others can find it too, so that others can find the one whom the Magi traveled so far to worship, and they can worship him also.

Jesus Christ. In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Amen.