

EPIPHANY OF THE LORD – 3 JAN 2010

It is always interesting to observe the different kinds of reactions to Jesus birth that you see in scripture. The shepherds for example reacted by glorifying and praising God. The three wise men prostrated themselves before Jesus and did him homage.

Herod on the other hand was quite different. He was not happy to hear of Jesus' birth. His reaction was one of fear and opposition. Rather than feeling joy, he was troubled. And so instead of receiving the Christ child, he sought to have him killed. Why? Why the different reaction? Because when the main focus of our life is something other than God, when we live for ourselves only, we inevitably start opposing God in some fashion. When we are drawn into worldly values and live for ourselves, we end up in some way opposing Jesus Christ and his Church.

And don't we do face that kind of opposition in our society today? Many of the most basic Church teachings are opposed or ridiculed, such as human sexuality, the sanctity of human life or even the definition of marriage. People lampoon the idea that couples shouldn't live together prior to marriage or that one should be a virgin on their wedding day. Even among baptized Christians, whole parts of Christianity are rejected by many. And when they do, at some point things go wrong, and it is always somebody else's fault. But what they don't realize is that it is their own sin that is at the source of their pain. And what they don't realize is that the church only reminds people of where truth can be found, where true happiness comes from and what God expects of us. The church's moral teachings are not meant to oppress us, but to liberate us. They are there to help us to know how to make good choices which enables us to live happy lives and have healthy relationships.

Unfortunately, there are those who just don't want to hear it. As a result, people avoid church, or sometimes even rise up against it. I mean you see for example, all kinds of popular books or movies that attack the church. Or laws in other western countries against public religious displays, or prayer in public schools. But even though there are attempts to silence the Church, God's plans cannot be defeated. Even though Herod hatched a plot against Jesus, it didn't work, and it will never work, because God is supreme and truth will prevail. And so we need not fear. Instead our reaction should be like that of the three kings.

In contrast to Herod, the three kings were filled with joy to find the newborn messiah. And they were happy because they wanted to meet him. They wanted to meet Jesus. They traveled a very long distance from foreign lands, they would have faced many risks and dangers along the way as well. And yet, they were willing to face all of that in order to meet the Christ child. Therefore, we have to ask ourselves, just how far are we willing to go to meet Jesus Christ in our lives? Lets face it, many people wouldn't lift a finger to get out of bed to come to church let alone travel across a burning desert in order to find Jesus. How hard do we really look for Jesus Christ?

If you notice, Herod didn't go looking for Jesus like the three kings did, he just said tell me when you find him. And of course in the end, he never did find Jesus. We too will never find Jesus unless we look for him from the bottom of our hearts. I can tell you all about Jesus all you like, but you will never find him unless you put

the effort in it yourselves and search for him. Therefore, we must ask ourselves, what are we willing to do to search for Jesus and welcome him into our lives? Are we happy to meet Jesus, and learn more about him? Or would we rather live only for ourselves? Are we happy to receive Jesus through the words we hear at Mass in the scriptures that we read, and are we happy to receive him in the Eucharist?

The three kings were overjoyed to find the Christ child, and brought him gifts and did him homage. This is our reaction when we find Jesus born inside us. This is our reaction when we decide that we are not going to live according to the world's standards, that we are not going to live only for ourselves, but instead we are going to live according to God's standards. We give back to God the gifts that we have to offer. We give generously of our time talents and treasure to help build up His Church. And when we do this, our faith then becomes an occasion of joy and gratitude, so much so that we will then want to share and make manifest to others that gift of good news that has been made manifest to us.

Epiphany serves as yet another reminder to us that Jesus, the Son of God is here. So how are you going to deal with it? There is no neutral ground. There are two kinds of reactions: Joy and acceptance of Jesus, or fear and rejection of Jesus. Do we accept Jesus and his Church and his teachings? Do we want to know them and live them out? If Jesus is going to be made manifest in us, then we must first want to find Jesus, look for him with an eager and willing heart. And when we do, Jesus will be made manifest in us and reign supreme as our savior. If we are wise, like the three wise men, that is what we will look for because that is where real truth, and beauty, and goodness and love resides. So what then will our reaction be? Do we long to find Jesus in our lives?

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