

## EPIPHANY 2015



The Epiphany is the greatest of feasts and not an afterthought, the tail end of Christmas. In the early Church it ranked with Easter and Pentecost, hence the custom of solemnly reading today the proclamation of Easter. Although we now tend to emphasise the coming of the Wise Men and Christ's manifestation to the Gentiles, the Epiphany celebrates the triple revelation of Christ to the world: his Birth as man at Bethlehem, his Baptism in the Jordan and the first Miracle at Cana in Galilee. Like Easter (and the Epiphany is called Easter in Winter) it was the day set apart for Christian Initiation through Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion.

Those closest to the events, who should have known better, those who belonged to the chosen people and had the Scriptures to guide them, King Herod, the chief priests, the scribes and the Pharisees, knew nothing about Jesus and cared even less. Caught up in their own selfish interests, they were ignorant of his birth and, when they found out from the Magi, they could think of nothing better than to massacre innocent children to rid themselves of the Christ Child. Those who came from afar, the Wise Men, who had nothing to guide them but a star, "were filled with great joy when they saw the light of the star" and they believed. "They saw the Child with Mary his mother and falling to their knees, they adored him." By their gifts they showed the depth and generosity of their love, as well as their understanding of who the Child was: the Messiah King, God incarnate and Saviour of the world. When they talk about Jesus, the words they use are those that on Good Friday will be nailed to the Cross: "The King of the Jews".

What about us? Are we like Herod and his cronies, so familiar with it all that we fail to recognise the Messiah, ignore and reject him, blot him out from our lives? To what does our knowledge of Scripture and Tradition avail, our calling and baptism, the very gift of faith? Would we cross deserts and mountains to follow a star? If it came to rest over a stable, would we stop and go in, or would we rush on, looking for something grander and more in keeping with our concept of God? If we saw a poor child in a manger, would we kneel and adore or would we hide our expensive gifts and keep them for someone else? Do we accept John the Baptist's testimony about the voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, listen to him"? Do we follow Our Lady's advice at Cana, "Do whatever he tells you"? Do we listen and obey?

The Epiphany invites us to live the gift of faith with total conviction. Now in the Ambrosian Sacramentary we find this prayer over the gifts for today's Mass. "Receive, Lord, in your goodness this sacrifice of praise that we offer as we celebrate the beginnings of our vocation to salvation." In Christ, God has called us to salvation. That is our vocation. By the light of a star the Magi discovered their vocation. They were called by God to follow his light, for which they had to forsake everything else. In obedience to his will, they fixed their gaze on the star, which led them to adore Him, who is the light of the world, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God.

We, too, have seen the star and have followed its light. In obedience to God's call, we have embraced our own vocation to salvation. In the stable at Bethlehem, in the Babe lying in the manger, we too have recognised the Word made flesh and we kneel in adoration with Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, the angels and the Magi, John the Baptist and the disciples at Cana. The light of the star leads us to Christ, Christ who is the light. In Christ all has been revealed. In him we find more than we can ever ask for or desire. To Him alone be glory for ever. Amen.

