

Peace to you friends.

Today we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany – the feast when Jesus was made known to the entire world. I know some of you may be saying didn't we do that on Christmas. Well, yes and no. Yes, we celebrated Christ's coming into the world on Christmas. But up until the Epiphany, the only people who knew about Jesus were Jewish people. At the Annunciation, Mary, who was Jewish, was told that she would give birth to the savior. Other members of Mary's family who were aware of Christ's presence, such as Joseph, Elizabeth, Zachariah and John the Baptist, were also Jewish. On Christmas, when the angels proclaimed glad tidings of great joy, they did so to Jewish shepherds. So up until the Epiphany, the only people to whom the incarnation of God had been made known were Jewish people.

Now, I am assuming that many of you are probably like me in that you have no Jewish roots. I am part Indian and part Italian. If in fact you are in this category of people who do not have Jewish roots, then today's feast should have special meaning for you, as it marks the time when Jesus was made known to the people who were not Jewish, to the gentiles. The term gentile of course is a term used by the Jewish people to describe anyone who is not Jewish, similar to the way the wizards in Harry Potter use the term muggle to describe anyone who is not of magical descent.

So the Epiphany is important for those of us who are gentiles. But it is also significant for those who are not gentiles, (so those of you who do have Jewish roots still need to pay attention to this homily). It's important to you because it marks a special time in the history of our salvation. It marks the time when one of God's promises to Israel would be fulfilled – the promise that all the nations would be gathered around the 12 tribes of Israel. It's the same promise referenced by Isaiah in the first reading; the promise to Israel that, "Nations shall walk by your light," and that all will "gather and come to you."

In today's Gospel reading we see this prophecy being fulfilled. We learn that a light, a star shining in the sky, leads the three Magi to *The Light* - Jesus Christ. These three gentiles come to Jesus and gather around Him – who is the savior not only for the Jewish people, but the one and only savior for all people. And upon seeing Him, they prostrate themselves and give Him homage. And then they present him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

These are three grown men, coming before an infant. They recognize that this is no ordinary baby. There is something special about this baby, something that makes them fall to the ground and praise Him. And then, after they have praised him, they give him gifts – it's as if they are saying, "everything we have is at your disposal. Everything we bring is for your glory." What a great model of Christianity this is. Upon seeing God present in the world, these three men bow, prostrate themselves and give homage. And then they go one step further and put their gifts as His disposal.

This is what I like to call the transforming power of today's Gospel. You see, the Gospel is meant not to *affirm* our lives but to *transform* our lives. And certainly Magi are models of how the news of the "newborn king of the Jews" can change our lives. Our lives are first and foremost transformed when we recognize who Jesus is.

That is, He is not just an ordinary king. There is something special about this king, something that led the Magi out of their daily routines, and on a difficult and gruesome journey towards Jerusalem and into Bethlehem – a journey that would surely make hassles such as sitting on an airport runway for three hours look rather comfortable by comparison.

When we, like the Magi recognize that Jesus is not an ordinary king, that He is not simply a good man, a prophet or a wise moral figure, but is indeed God incarnate, our lives are forever changed, and we embark on this difficult yet thrilling lifelong journey called Christianity.

This journey, for us who are Catholic, leads us to the very presence of Jesus. Most notably we encounter Him truly present in the Eucharist. And like the magi, when we find ourselves in His presence, we prostrate ourselves and give Him homage. Did you ever wonder why we kneel during the Eucharistic prayer? We're giving homage to Jesus Christ, who is truly present in the sacrament. It's not an artificial gesture made up by people in Rome. No, it's our response the recognition that we are now in the presence of Jesus Christ (who is truly and really present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist). And we proclaim this faith through bodily gestures. We *kneel* at Eucharistic prayer during the consecration, we *bow* before we receive communion, we *genuflect* in front of the tabernacle, we *say Amen* to Him when receiving him into our own bodies (by the way, when you say Amen, say it with conviction and excitement – so often people come to Christ looking like zombies who have no clue as to what they were receiving – but this is God we are receiving, so let's say it with some gusto!). When we do this, we like the magi, use our bodies to express our faith that there is something extraordinary going on here.

And after we give homage to God, we, like the Magi, are called to place our gifts at the service of the Lord. And here I am not solely meaning that we give our time, talent and treasure to our local parish or local Church. Rather, I am suggesting that like the Magi, we need to lay our gifts down at the feet of the Lord. This means that whatever gifts we have, are for the glory of God. So for many of us, our families are a great gift. I am suggesting what we need to do is place our families at the feet of the Lord. Let's not worry about our family honor and status, but rather ask how our family can play a role in God's plan of salvation for all nations. How can our family glorify God? Some of us are gifted intellectually. I am suggesting that our intellectual endeavors should be placed at the feet of the Lord, so that we our intellectual work glorifies God and not just us. . Some of us are gifted as teachers – I am suggesting that our teaching should reflect our faith and give glory to God. And I could go on and on.

My point, is that the transforming power of today's Gospel calls those of us who recognize that Jesus is more than an ordinary king to embark on that difficult journey. We are called to prostrate ourselves and give Him homage in everything we do. We are to place our gifts at His disposal so that they may be instruments for God's plan to bring all nations to Christ. This is the model given to us by the Magi, and this is our Mission as a Church – to help gather all nations around the 12 tribes of Israel, with Christ at the center. So let us follow the example of the magi, let us follow the one True Light and place our gifts before Him, so that He may be made known to all nations.