

Epiphany – 2022

2021 has again been quite the year. A couple of years ago, we could not have fully imagined how our lives would change. It is easy to name the challenges and sufferings. But as you look back on the year just ended, can you also name three ways God has revealed His presence and grace in your life? That is the meaning of Epiphany: to identify those encounters with the often unexpected and even paradoxical manifestations of God's work. The enduring symbols of Epiphany are so familiar – the Light, the Wise, the Gifts, and the Journey to find God in flesh made manifest – and they remain patterns for us.

The Magi were men who studied the stars, in line with common belief at the time that the movement of the stars governed human history. But suddenly, a new light appeared, drawing them to follow its unexpected course. That journey revealed that it is this Child Who guides the Star, not the star which governs this Child. Connecting Hebrew prophecy with the signs around them, they recognize a King of the Jews has been born. Their Gospel journey that prefigures our own, seeking light in the midst of darkness, guided by faith when human wisdom fails. Their gifts, too, might suggest to us today three ways we can encounter God.

First, the **gold** speaks of prosperity and blessing. All we have and all we are – our possessions, our education and experiences, our particular talents and skills, our relationships – these are all gifts from God's infinite goodness, simply because He loves us. ***Count your blessings today, and be willing to share a portion of them with those who need some Epiphany of God's merciful presence.*** ***Second***, the **incense** suggests the presence of the Divine. It invites us to prayer, praise, worship, thanksgiving. Our spiritual lives are themselves a gift, for we do not need to travel far or seek God in obscure, uncertain signs; Jesus reveals Himself openly to us in Scripture, in Sacrament, in the life of His Body, the Church. ***Take some moments today to pray and say to God: I love you, I'm sorry, Thank you, and Please ... the four phrases we learn as part of growing up, also reflecting the four kinds of Christian prayer.*** And

third, myrrh was used for medicine and burials ... a resin that flows from a wound to a particular small tree in the mid-East and so a powerful symbol of Christ's wounds on the Tree of Calvary that bring healing. God reveals Himself most profoundly in the Cross, where mercy triumphs over judgment, as St. Paul says, and suffering is redeemed by love. While often more challenging, ***Epiphany helps us think about how even adversity, loss, and sorrow can also draw us closer to God in humble trust.*** The Magi saw only a small Child with human eyes, but also saw beyond the appearance of the moment to recognize the King. They did not see what He would become, but they trusted in what they themselves would not see. We ask today for that same trust when what God has prepared is not yet visible, perhaps a future we ourselves will not see.

Gold, incense, and myrrh remind us that ***in joy, in prayer, in love, even in sorrow***, we are the Lord's, baptized into His Body, united in His saving love, guided by the Light of Faith that sees even in the world's darkness and allows us to make our journey to seek the Lord in hope that endures. Today, we each bring the gift of our joys, our prayers, our love, and even our sorrows, to bow like the Wise before that same divine Mercy revealed to us in the Eucharist: ***Jesus, God in flesh made manifest.***