

Epiphany of our Lord-2023

Historians, astronomers, and Bible scholars have engaged in long debates about the Epiphany story. Did it actually happen? Was there really a star that led the magi -three kings- from the East? The debate will go on for ever as there are no simple answers. But it would be more fruitful to focus on the message of the story.

If you ever visit Cologne (Köln) Cathedral in Germany, you can find behind the main altar, a large reliquary said to contain the bones of the three wise men. “How did they get to Cologne?” you might ask.

The wise men’s bones are believed to have been located in Persia and then brought to Constantinople by St. Helena, the mother of the emperor Constantine. The bones were transferred from Constantinople to Milan in the fifth century and to Cologne in 1163. So not only did the wise men journey during their lives but even after death their relics went on a journey.

Even though the special star of the east was risen for all people, *only the three wisemen could grasp the divine message behind it*. God sends his signs of salvation into the life of each person in various ways. Amidst our busy lives, we may risk missing those signs in life. The wisemen could get the message as they were in silence and prayer, seeking God’s mysteries with open heart.

The focal point is: the physical journey the wise men made to Bethlehem was not *‘the only journey they made’*. *They also made a journey in their hearts from paganism to worshipping Jesus*. They were not Jews; scholars tell us they were priests of an Eastern religion who consulted the stars. Possibly they could be followers of some kind of pagan religion. Though before they set out on their journey to Bethlehem, they were star-readers, *they went on an interior journey from reading stars to worshipping Jesus as Savior*.

It is not strange to note that there are many among Christians also, who keep on consulting stars, horoscope etc. to ascertain fortune and safe future. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “*Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens, etc. contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone.*” Therefore, any good Christian who engage in those activities place in doubt their faith and trust in God.

The three gifts the wisemen offered to Jesus are symbolic of what the child represents: Gold is a gift given to kings, and it points to the kingship of Jesus: frankincense refers to his divinity and Myrrh points to his humanity/mortality, as it is a sign of suffering and death. In fact, he is the “Lamp of God, to be sacrificed for the salvation of the world”.

B&S, the wise men went on a journey to Jesus, a journey within themselves. How would you respond to the message of the magi? We are called to allow Jesus be Lord of our lives, not just when it suits us. We each have a journey to make to Jesus, because none of us is yet fully converted and each of us has corners in our hearts and lives in need of Jesus’ healing and redemption. Like the wise men, we too need to rely on the grace of God to lead us to the light of Jesus our Savior.

Finally, the message of Epiphany is the *unity and universality of God’s grace*. It is not anymore reserved to the Jews-the chosen people of God alone, but open to all nations and all peoples. Sometimes, darkness seems to cover the earth and hope can seem an illusion. But God’s light continues to enter the world to push back the darkness. We always need to deepen our awareness that “there is no name given to humanity on earth for salvation than the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord” *We need to pray that all nations may come to know that Jesus is the one Savior, that all nations may fall prostrate before Jesus. Let’s work and pray that human fear, selfishness, and violence may not undo God’s work of salvation in today’s world. Happy Feast of Epiphany!*