

Commentary on the Readings for January 8, 2023

The Epiphany of the Lord

Today, the Church celebrates the **Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord Jesus Christ**. This being the 12th night of the Christmas Season was often the reason for special celebrations closing the official Christmas period. In some countries and cultures it was a special day for celebrating the arrival of the Magi to worship the new born "King of the Jews." All of these reasons are good and worthwhile, but we should keep the true meaning of Epiphany in mind. The word is from the ancient Greek and means "**manifestation**" or "**appearance**" as when a noted actor or speaker first appears on a stage before an audience. In this feast, we celebrate the coming of God into our world as Man to teach us the way back to the Father. Although He came as an infant child, just like any other child, He is still "God with us."

In the **First Reading** from the *Prophet Isaiah (60:1- 6)*, we hear the prophet encouraging the people of Israel to rejoice and not be so sad for they were sorely depressed because of the shambles their life had fallen to after the Babylonian Exile. He tells them that if they are true to their Lord God, then the glory that was theirs at the time of David and Solomon will return. The Church looks upon this passage as a prophesy of the glory that came to Jerusalem with the birth of the Divine Savior at Bethlehem. To see how this prophesy has been fulfilled, just think of how this land has been blessed by millions of people (tourists and others) from all over the world following in the footsteps of the Magi to see where the Christ Child was born.

The **Responsorial Psalm is (72:1-13)**. Here the psalmist also echoes the theme of celebrating the coming of the "King of kings and the Lord of lords." Although he might not have realized it at the time this Psalm was written, his description of the "king's son" fits Jesus as the divine King of the Jews and all mankind, who has and will accomplish all that was prophesied of Him.

The **Second Reading** is from *St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians (3:2-6)*. In chapter one, Paul has just given us a brief glimpse of God's Plan of Salvation. Here he explains how he received this great insight and what it means for all who accept Christ and are baptized in His name.

In the **Gospel Reading** from the *Gospel of Matthew (2:2-12)*, we hear the familiar story of the three men called Magi; but elsewhere they are called "wise men" or "astrologers." Still, in other places they are called "kings." Whether or not they were any or all of these, they represent all mankind as the first Gentiles to come and worship the Babe of Bethlehem and recognize Him as a "King." It took faith and obedience to their inner conscience for the Magi to travel such a distance to worship and give gifts to the child who was to be there, and our, Lord and Savior. So let us not look so much at who or what these three men were; but rather, let us see what they did out of faith. Can we imitate them in doing the same? Something to think about during your prayer time this week!

MFB