

The Epiphany of the Lord January 3, 2021

Traditionally, the Feast of the Epiphany is the day when we add the Three Wise Men to our nativity scenes. It is on this day that we commemorate their journey to find the King of the Jews whose star appeared in the East.

In older manger scenes, these men are depicted as three kings - one European, one African, and one Asian. Though this is probably not the most accurate depiction of who these wise men from the East were, it does capture the deeper, spiritual meaning of this great feast. Jesus, the King of the Jews, is also the Savior of the World. He comes to save all people, no matter their race, no matter their family's religion, no matter their ethnic background, no matter their language. There is no one whom God does not love, no one who is not made in His image and likeness, and no one who cannot be saved.

This feast day is an opportunity for us to reflect on how we are all brothers and sisters, members of one human family, called to care for each other in love.

This unity of the whole human race is based on our creation by a loving God. Throughout history, the Catholic Church has always taught that no race is inferior to another. Our rejection of racism comes from the fact that each human being is created in the image and likeness of God. That gives each of us a dignity that no other creature in the universe has.

The dignity of each and every human being comes from one other fact - that Jesus Christ came to earth to die for us all. No one is excluded from this universal mission of Jesus Christ to save the world. And He established His Church to go out to all the world, to every creature, to every man, woman, and child, with the good news that Jesus Christ died to save them. He wants us to make the world one human family united in a faith which transcends every race, every nation, every language, every culture, and every way of life. We are all called to be one in Jesus Christ.

On this great day, Jesus is revealed to be the Light of the World. The prophet Isaiah speaks beautifully about this in today's first reading. He describes a great light which is the glory of the Lord shining over Jerusalem. By that light, the other nations of the world emerge from the darkness that covers them. Jesus Christ is that Light, made manifest first to the people of Israel, which then spread out to scatter the darkness of the whole world.

This is the truth which we affirm in faith today. Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. In fact, there is no other way to the Father than by walking in His light. There is no other way to salvation than through Him.

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Many might find this offensive. They might think that it is arrogant for us to claim that salvation can only be found in Jesus Christ. But that is what we believe as Christians. And that is the truth that we celebrate this day. Only in Jesus do we find the fulfillment of all our desires for justice and peace. Only in Jesus can we bring all the world's peoples into one family of love. Only in Jesus can we find salvation.

It is true that there are smaller lights that can lead us, just as the Star of Bethlehem led the wise men. We can follow the light of our human reason and the light of our conscience. But, they are only smaller lights. They are dim in comparison to the Light of the World, Jesus Christ, just as the Star of Bethlehem was dim before the brilliance of the Baby Jesus.

That is why, throughout the centuries, men and women of faith have risked their lives to bring the good news of Jesus' love to all parts of the world. It was to share this light with others so that they too could know the love of God made manifest in Jesus.

At our baptism, we were given a candle which was lit from the Easter candle. This light represents the new life we received through Jesus Christ. Our parents were told to keep this light burning brightly. We were given that light to share with others. Together, we are called to bring the Light of Christ to the World, to scatter the darkness of ignorance, and to unite all peoples in love and faith.

There is a hymn by Fred Pratt that says: "Christ is the world's light, Christ and none other. Born in our darkness, He became our brother. If we have seen Him, we have seen the Father. Glory to God on high!"

On this day, Jesus is revealed for the whole world to see. And, in this epiphany, we see the Father. He is revealed as the Savior of the World, gathering people of every race, language, culture, and nation into one family. Let us gather here today, then, not only to worship the child who is born for us, but to make Him known to the nations so that His light might scatter the darkness of sin, racism, ignorance, and injustice.