

## THE EPIPHANY of THE LORD – Year C

A gentleman desirous of obtaining a parrot that could speak two languages kept searching for several months. One day the operator of the local pet shop called him & said that he had just such a parrot. On arriving at the pet shop, the operator informed the prospective customer that the parrot spoke not two languages, but five. He was delighted. So, he said, “Just send the cage & the parrot to my home. My wife will be there to receive it.”

When the purchaser arrived at home at six o'clock that evening, he asked his wife, “What is for dinner, honey?”

“You should ask,” she replied. “You sent it home this afternoon.”

“Do you mean to tell me, dear, that you cooked the parrot that I sent home? The one I've been searching for such a long time? And did you know that the parrot could speak not only two languages, but five?”

“Why then,” asked his wife, “didn't it speak up?”

Anyhow, this Sunday the Church celebrates the Feast of the Epiphany. This feast reminds us how the Lord reveals Himself to the Gentiles. If the Lord has shown Himself to the Jews/God's chosen people at Christmas, today He does it to the non-Jewish/the Magi. All in all, today's feast completes the Lord's revelation to the whole world. He has made Himself known to His chosen people & the Gentiles. But, what is the significance of this feast for us Christians in the twenty-first century? How can this feast help us on our daily spiritual journey?

We all have heard the story of the Magi before. But, what we do not realize is that the Lord did not appear with fanfare & a big sign “I am the Lord & the Savior of the world.” Instead, He required the shepherd & the Magi to do their own searches & figure out for themselves the end-results. The Magi's main profession was astrology. Back then, astrology was not a glamorous career as its students did not have powerful tools like the Hubble scope to study the universe. In fact, astrology was considered witchcraft. That is why Galileo – an early astrologer – was persecuted even by the Church. But, the Magi did not let persecution or any life challenge to prevent them from achieving their dream. They labored day & night & searched the whole universe for any unusual sign. They took time to observe all the constellations & scan the dark sky every night for any strange star. Their hard work & patient effort was finally paid off as they found an unusual star in the sky. They decided to track it down & ended up in Bethlehem. Their personal & diligent search brought them an encounter with the Lord Jesus.

I studied Church history & the Bible, I was amazed by the number of people who were interested in meeting God & took on a personal search for God. In the Old Testament, we see how Abraham & Moses never stopped searching for God in their daily lives. Abraham did not search only for God but also for the Promised Land. Meanwhile, Moses tried to look for God from a bush to a high mountain. He also wanted to find effective ways to keep God's people close to their God. Hence, he asked God to reveal to him God's Ten Commandments. In the New Testament, we learn that Mary constantly searched for the Lord throughout her life & humbly answered, “I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your will.” Like Mary, Paul sincerely looked for the Lord all his days & tried to do what he thought might please the Lord. He imprisoned & killed lots of early Christians whom he considered a group of cult followers. But, the Lord appeared to him & helped him turn his life around. These Biblical people always searched for the Lord & were open to God's messages to them. Because of that,

they all met the Lord & experienced miracles in their own ways. I believe that one of the reasons we do not see miracles happen a lot in our time is because we do not look for them like people did before. Also, the Magi had that encounter with the Lord because they diligently searched for God. So, if we want to have the same experience & meet God, we must do the same thing & look for God day & night. We should not let others tell us about Jesus or what to believe!

Besides telling us the importance of searching for God daily on our own, this feast also teaches us another spiritual lesson. We were told that the Magi got lost in their search for the strange star. As they were confused & frustrated, they ran into King Herod, who was cunning & wicked. Once he heard about the new-born king of the Jews, he felt threatened & anxious. He inquired with the Magi all about his competition & tried to find ways to eliminate Baby Jesus. He tried to convince the Magi that he wanted to come to Bethlehem to pay homage to Baby Jesus if they would return & report everything to him. Thankfully, the Magi were able to see through King Herod's manipulative request & recognize his evil intention. They never returned to the king & chose another way home. For me, that is a great spiritual lesson for us.

We live in a time that there're some people like King Herod who appears to say the right things, but has evil intentions deep down in his/her heart. We should not assume that a person is good & holy by his/her pious appearance. Rather, we should judge someone by his/her real intentions. We should pray that the Lord would help us expose one's manipulative language & see who he/she really is. The story of this feast also gives a great warning to everyone with evil nature or desire. You might cover yourself with charming language & pretentious appearance; & your heart might be full of evil intentions. But, know that you will not get away with it because the Lord will expose your true identity one way or another.

My dear brothers & sisters, you've heard the expression, "Don't judge a book by its cover." King Herod might appear like a book with a nice, beautiful cover. But, deep down he was full of evil intentions. With God's help, the Magi were able to recognize his true identity. Similarly, with God's guidance, we'll be able to identify & avoid people like him in our world. Also, if we truly want to meet the Lord, we need to search for Him diligently every day; & he will surely reveal Himself to us like He did to the Magi today.