

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord. While there are several different mysteries associated with this Solemnity (Jesus' Baptism and the Miracle at Cana where He turned water into wine), the mystery we most associate with this day is the revelation to the Gentiles through the Magi and the star. We know, of course, that the Magi bring gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Here are some things you might not know about Epiphany story (much of this information was taken from the CD in our Lighthouse Catholic Media display: "Prepare the Way of the King" by Dr. Scott Hahn). First, in the Ancient Near East people did not bring gifts to kings, with the idea that "here's something I own, but I'm now giving it to you." Everything belonged to the king! It was his, so it wasn't a "gift" to him. The idea of bringing gold, frankincense and myrrh to Jesus, the new-born King, was a way to say, "I recognize this is yours already, and I surrender it to you." Second, when we look at the Magi, they probably were not actually kings, nor simply star-gazers – they were magicians. They would have dabbled in the dark arts. They did occult practices that go against the law of God. Gold, frankincense and myrrh are all elements most likely used in their dark craft.

So what's going on here? The Magi, come before the Christ-Child and lay down their occult practices. In essence, they are saying, "I have been living my life seeking – seeking something beyond me: knowledge, power, authority – but now I have found what I am looking for, not in magic, but in You, Christ. I lay down my occult practices at your feet. I will not go back to what I was doing before – I will depart '**by another way**' (Matthew 2:12) the way of God." Epiphany is a call to conversion. We are invited to look at our lives and see if there are areas that we have not submitted to the loving authority of God, areas in which we have tried to grasp control and power. We can look to the example of the Magi and ask God for the grace to surrender to Him. Note, too, that it was through encounter with Christ – not simply study – that brought them to this moment. As they encountered the Christ-Child, they "**prostrated themselves and did him homage**" (Matthew 2:11). When we encounter Christ, when we come into personal contact with Him, He touches us in such a powerful way that we will *want* to surrender to Him. It is, after all, a surrender to joy, to love, to life!

So that's the Magi. I just want to touch on one other piece of the story – the Star. It is a wonderful thing to notice that *all of creation* proclaims God's praise (cf. Psalm 19). Do we notice? Do we see how God is working in all of creation? A lot of times we think of God as a "deistic" God – whereby He created everything and then steps back and watches, cannot getting involved at all. That makes as much sense as saying a builder could not enter into a house that he made! Our understanding of God is not "deistic" but "theistic"... He is present in all of creation, moving with His love. He is not watching us from a distance, but is closer to us than we are to ourselves (closer than marrow is to the bone, as one of my professors would say). God uses everything – everything – to be a sign of Him. Even the evil in the world He allows because He is going to change that evil into an even *greater good!*

This also shows that Science is not opposed to Catholicism! God's constant presence in the universe points to this truth: Science and Catholicism are not at odds; they are two different ways of looking at the same truth. We believe that God created the universe with *order* – and that is an underlying assumption of every scientist – that there is a discoverable order to the universe. This order permeates the huge movement of galaxies, stars and planets, as well as the tiny movement of molecules, atoms and electrons! To expound on this point, some people look at the creation account in Genesis (Genesis 1 about the 6 days of creation) and argue that it goes against what we know by science. But they are looking at the same reality from two different standpoints – one is that of a scientist, the other is that of a poetic, romantic lover. If you ask a groom to describe his bride's eyes, he would undoubtedly describe something very different than her optometrist would (unless she happened to be marrying her optometrist!). Yet no one would argue that his description is wrong; he is a lover and is describing the lover's view of the eyes. The Bible describes creation from a poetic, romantic lover's point of view (remember, the summary of the Bible is "God wants to marry us"). It describes events in a very different way than a scientist would, because the Bible is attempting to relay a deeper truth and mystery than simply the historical, scientific account of what happened, play by play.

All of this is to say that the mystery of the Epiphany points to the truth that God is moving all around us, in all of creation, and if we have eyes to see, we will recognize His incredible and intimate love.