

Epiphany - C
Isaiah 60:1-6;
Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6;
Matthew 2:1-12
Little Flower - 1/5/25

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Epiphany. Traditionally the Church celebrated the Epiphany on January 6th. After the Vatican II reform of the Liturgy, Epiphany was transferred to Sunday in countries such as ours where it was not a holyday of obligation.

In Western Christianity, Christmas has always been the primary feast. However, in Eastern Christianity Epiphany is the older and more important feast. In earlier times, the Church celebrated three mysteries on the Solemnity of the Epiphany: the visit of the Magi, Jesus' baptism by John, and the wedding feast at Cana. The Liturgies the next two Sundays will commemorate Jesus' baptism and the wedding feast at Cana.

Christmas and Epiphany are two sides of the same coin. On Christmas we celebrate the fact of Jesus' birth, the fact of the Incarnation of the Son of God. On Epiphany we celebrate the significance of his birth, the significance of the Incarnation of the Son of God. On Christmas we celebrate Jesus' manifestation to the Jews, represented by the shepherds. On Epiphany we celebrate Jesus' manifestation to the Gentiles, i.e., to the peoples of the world, represented by the magi. The coming of the magi was the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah: *"Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you: Your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses."*

In today's reading from Ephesians, St. Paul reveals the mystery that was made known to him. The mystery is *"that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."* In other words, the mystery revealed is that salvation in Jesus Christ is for all people.

Several years ago I read an article entitled "The Small Church."¹ Although the article was written from a non-Catholic perspective, it makes some good points. Churches remain small and sometimes die because they forget that the primary mission of every church community is to go out and make disciples, not simply to care for their members.

In Saturday's Gospel [Jn. 1:35-42], when John the Baptist saw Jesus passing by, he said, *"Behold, the Lamb of God."* Immediately, two of John's disciples followed Jesus. When Jesus asked them what they were looking for, they told him they wanted to see where he was staying. He responded, *"Come, and you will see."* It seems to me that as Christians we are called to do as John the Baptist and Jesus did, i.e., to point the way to Jesus and then invite others to come and see, confident that if they come, they will see Jesus in us and then believe in Him.

My brothers and sisters, the story of the magi offers another image for us. The magi followed the star that led them to Christ. I would suggest that each of us is called to be a star, a light, that leads others to Christ. Jesus calls us to be lights to the world. Our best witness is the manner of our life. As St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, *"Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth"* [5:8b-9]. Today and every day we are called to be the epiphany, the manifestation, of Christ to the world.

¹Bill Easum, "The Small Church," *Religious Product News*, December 2012, 10-13.