

Dear Brothers and Sisters



May you rejoice in God who sent his kid to help straighten things out". Not your usual Christmas greeting, it was hand written by the sender, but I thought it summed things up pretty well.

On Friday we entered the New Year, 2021. For us, as Christians, time is not a cyclical, repetitive thing. We are not celebrating "another" New Year. Just as we do not experience "another" Christmas, or "another" birthday, or "another" anniversary. For us these things are never repetitions, but are always new. The events we experience are always new because Christ -God's kid-

has entered our history. As St. Paul says: all things are recapitulated in him. He wants to help straighten things out.

Today's Feast is one way to straighten things out: The Epiphany, or the 'Manifestation' of Christ, to the nations. The Magi, or three wise men, come from the Far East, from the orient, that is, they are 'oriented.' They are not disoriented. If we seek Christ, we are not disoriented. Christ gives orientation in life. The Magi represent the far distant nations, those who do not belong to the covenant God made with his people. With them comes all of humanity, all the nations of the earth, to adore the new born king.

The Magi are a prophecy of what this new born child has come to do. He will open up God's covenant to all peoples of the earth. No one who is excluded from the presence of God. There is no person, no matter how disoriented they are, or what they have done, who is not welcomed by God.

This is our feast. We are the people of the nations, we are the gentiles, those not of the Jewish race, those who have nonetheless been brought into the covenant of God.

The Magi bring with them three gifts: Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. Gold because this child is a king. As King he will not rule with oppression, or by making his authority felt, or by being demanding or overbearing. His kingdom will be one of humility, meekness and forgiveness. His kingdom will not belong to this earth. As king he is either welcomed or seen as a threat. There is no middle ground. We either accept him as king in our life, we either open ourselves up to his kingdom within us, or we have to do away with him. When Christ appears, Herod has a fit. Herod wants to be in control himself, he has his own kingdom, his own way of doing things, and will not tolerate any one who challenges this.

The Magi bring Frankincense because this child is God. Just as frankincense, or incense, rises up to the heavens, so too is this child of heaven. He is incarnate of the Holy Spirit. But his divinity will be hidden in his humanity.

Thus, the Magi also bring the gift of Myrrh. Myrrh is one of the spices used to embalm the body at a funeral. This child is not only divine, but also human. He came to share in our humanity, he has our very nature. As we humans experience death, so too will he. As a baby he is laid in the wood of the manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes, prefiguring his being nailed to the wood of the cross, and the burial cloth with which he will be wrapped and put in the tomb. He was born to die, but his death will be unlike any other. He will experience death as God and man. God becomes present for humanity even in the moment of death. Death is no longer a punishment for sin, death is no longer a privation of life, a separation from God, but it becomes -for those who are in Christ- the means, the door to Eternal Life.

May this New Year and this celebration of the Epiphany of the Lord, bring us all health and happiness. May God's kid straighten us all out. May he give us health of mind, body and soul to do the will of God, and the happiness which comes from discovering that our time is made new and redeemed in Christ.

Fr. Sean