

## FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



Have you ever noticed that our church faces east?

The sanctuary is oriented, such that when you come to Mass you look east.

When God created the earth he ‘planted a garden in Eden, which is in the east, and there he put the man he had fashioned.’ (Genesis 2, 8)

The first pages of the Bible reveal God’s plan for us, namely that we be oriented, a people who face east. The east means Paradise, communion with God and with others.

Geographically the east witnesses the rising of the sun at daybreak. It is from the east that light appears, light which dispels darkness.

Spiritually the east also witnesses the light of God’s love. This light is Christ: ‘what has come into being in him was life, life that was the light of men; and light shines in darkness’ (John 1, 4-5)

It is only after the Fall, the sin of Adam and Eve, that humanity finds itself ‘expelled from the from the garden of Eden’ (Gen 3, 23). Spiritually we were no longer able to face east; we were banished, not by God, but through our own doing: ‘he was in the world that had come into being through him, and the world did not recognize him. He came to his own and his own people did not accept him.’ (John, 1, 10-11)

Today’s feast of the Epiphany witnesses ‘some wise men who came to Jerusalem from the east asking, ‘Where is the infant king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage.’ (Matthew 2, 1-2)

In the Mass of Christmas Eve we heard the words from the Prophet Isaiah: ‘*The* people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.’ Pope Francis reflected on these words:

“This prophecy of Isaiah is not simply an emotional or sentimental matter. It moves us because it states the deep reality of what we are: a people who walk, and all around us – and within us as well – there is darkness and light. On Christmas night, as the spirit of darkness enfolds the world, there takes place anew the event which always amazes and surprises us: the people who walk see a great light.

“God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all” (1 Jn 1:5). Yet on the part of the people there are times of both light and darkness, fidelity and infidelity, obedience, and rebellion; times of being a pilgrim people and times of being a people adrift.

In our personal history too, there are both bright and dark moments, lights and shadows. If we love God and our brothers and sisters, we walk in the light; but if our heart is closed, if we are dominated by pride, deceit, self-seeking, then darkness falls within us and around us. “Whoever hates his brother – writes the Apostle John – is in the darkness; he walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go, because the darkness has blinded his eyes” (1 Jn 2:11).

On this night, like a burst of brilliant light, there rings out the proclamation of the Apostle: ‘God’s grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race’ (Tit 2:11)”.

We are a people who are walking, travelling, like the wise men. Our life is a journey, with a beginning and an end, and we as travelers now have the possibility to spiritually follow the light of Christ, to face east. Without this light there is disorientation. May the light of Christ accompany us on this Great Feast of the Epiphany, and remain with us during our journey in this year, 2018. Happy Epiphany! Happy New Year!

Fr. Sean