

## The Epiphany.

6-1-2019.

... by another road.

Did you hear those wonderful images today's readings have presented to us?

In our first reading: "A multitude of camels shall cover you, - dromedaries from Midian and Ephah, all those of Sheba shall come....."

The Gospel with its announcement: "that wise men came from the East to Jerusalem, asking: 'Where is the child, who has been born king of the Jews?'" Or the Responsorial Psalm: "May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute."

Few New Testament stories have captured our imagination like that of the Magi. In fact, our imaginations have enlarged on this Gospel story of Matthew to the extent that we have turned the Magi into kings, we've given them camels for transport, and we've even given them names: Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar.

The very charm of this ancient story, however, may cause us to miss the point Matthew was trying to make in telling it to us. He highlighted the contrast between the Jewish and Gentile reaction to the birth of the Messiah.

The Magi, who were not Jews, studied the stars, saw God's message, and travelled from afar to worship the new-born king. The Jewish leaders, a few miles from Bethlehem, with the Scriptures to guide them, knew exactly where the Christ, the Messiah, would be born. Yet they failed to act on their knowledge, other than to tell Herod, who then sent his soldiers to kill the child.

In putting things in this way Matthew makes the point that Jesus belongs to the world, and not just to the Jewish people. At the time this Gospel was written, the young Christian community had burst out of Palestine and entered the great world of the Roman Empire. Gentile converts were entering the fold in growing numbers. The early Church was determined that those new converts did not have to convert to Judaism in order to be Christian. Making this decision, they followed the example of Jesus, who rejected boundaries, and welcomed everyone who came to him, - pious and publican, saint and sinner.

This feast of the Epiphany teaches us, therefore, that we must be open and welcoming to others, - whatever their race, their ethnic background, their culture, gender, sexual orientation, or social class and standing. It teaches us that God does not recognise those boundaries and borders, nor should we, who gather round his Son in the community we call Church.

Jesus came as a gift for everyone, but with one proviso. He came only for those who search, for those who persist, for those who will not quit or give up, for those who will seek him out, no matter how weary, discouraged or frustrated they may feel. He came to save those who were of good will.

The search for Jesus is, therefore, something like a treasure hunt. We must find our way to Bethlehem, and it is a troubling and sometimes difficult journey. We will never get there if we give up.

We will probably only find him completely and totally at the end of our life. However, the more we search, the more we realize that the God revealed to us through the child of Bethlehem, becomes the God for whom we seek.

All of us are born explorers, adventurers, romantics and seekers. We need, once again, to become like those wise men, people who would take the risk of crossing deserts because a star shone over a new-born babe.

We should seek the Babe of Bethlehem, to stir us out of the routine and monotony of our lethargy, to turn us from plodders into searchers for faith; from dullards to adventurers in our quest for meaning, from cynics to romantics in love with one another, and from hardened realists to men and women of dreams and missions.

Like the wise men of old, we need to make a deliberate decision to travel by another road.

