

Epiphany 2017
January 8, 2017
Holy Spirit (SH/HT)

Is 60:1-6
Eph. 3:2-3a, 5-6
Matt 2:1-12

I. As I was studying the readings for this weekend, I came across a commentary which explained that the gesture the magi used when they found Mary and the baby Jesus was a gesture reserved more for God: they “prostrated themselves and did him homage.” Even though they came allegedly looking for the “newborn king of the Jews,” they ended up finding someone much more important: the son of God. And so their gesture is a response to the One they find. Scripture doesn’t say this is how they greeted the king, Herod. This is how they greeted Jesus – with a gesture reserved for a god.

In other words, they had the ability to adapt, they were able to open to, whatever or whomever, they might find. And they worshiped God.

II. So, what has drawn you and me here today? Why have we come? If this evening (afternoon) someone asks you, “Why did you go to Mass?” what would you say? Have we come to worship?

What is worship? Worship is valuing or treasuring God above all things. People who worship are people who value God above all other values, all other aspects of life, all other dimensions of life – as important as any of those values or other things in our life may be. God is so important that we are willing to take time, to schedule going to Mass even though there may be any number of other things we could be doing. By worshiping we are showing our love for God. We are saying we want to deepen our love for God. We want to make that value of God even more important than it already is.

III. As we enter into this new year of 2017, would you believe with me that the most important date in this calendar year is our weekly meeting when we gather to worship? Would you agree with me that our weekly gathering to worship may well be the most transforming date on the calendar? More transforming than any secular holiday, than an anniversary, a party – even our own birthday! If you this is the most important event in our schedule, then you and I would join the Magi who have to realize that all of creation bows before our Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. We come to worship because this experience connects us with the story God is telling. This is a story about the ups and downs of life: the joy and the sorrow, sin and grace, struggle and hope, meaning and destiny, life and death.

- we come to connect our story with God's story and remind ourselves once again of how much God truly walks with us.
- we come because we need to hear again God's word of forgiveness and unfailing love for us – even when we sin against him
- we come because we need to hear his word of instruction, to connect again with the moral compass God's teachings give us
- we come because we need to fortify our courage to go out into the world again and face those challenges we deal with everyday.

V. And we worship with the Magi because it helps us to stand in opposition to all that King Herod represents. Herod was one of the most ruthless, brutal, corrupt rulers of the ancient world. Not only did he murder thousands of his own people, but members of his own family as well. Nothing would stop him from holding onto his throne. Herod symbolizes all that is anti-life and anti-God, in our world today. Worship sets us apart from all that is evil in the world and enables to proclaim to the world Jesus is Lord above all other forces in the world.

VI. There is an ancient story which reminds us of the power of worship.

The story says the Magi were of different ages: Caspar was very young; Balthazar was middle-aged and Melchior was a senior citizen. When they arrived in Bethlehem, they entered the house where Jesus was.

Caspar met another young man – and so they talked of their ideals and hopes and goals for the future.

Balthazar met a middle-aged teacher and they spoke of duty and responsibility.

Melchior met another senior citizen and they spoke of gratitude and their yearning for peace.

Then they all prostrated themselves and did Jesus homage – understanding that Jesus spoke to each of them, at each stage of our life.

VII. So why have you and I come to worship?

In this Eucharist we give God homage and become one with him – so that we can proclaim our love for God in word and deed. (Fr. Dwayne Thoman)