

The Epiphany of the Lord January 7, 2018 St. Agnes Church

So, how was your Christmas?

Was it a good experience for you this year?

Did it renew your faith in Jesus Christ?

Did you find peace

or were you stressed out the whole time?

Were you frustrated by all that needed to get done,

overwhelmed by all the secular and worldly expectations,

with gifts and get-togethers;

angry with family members;

impatient with children;

overly busy with decorations and cookies and shopping.

Did you stop and bow down before the reason for the season

or was everything 'full speed ahead'?

Are you glad the season is all but over,

that relatives have gone back home,

that all the hype has run its course

and it's time to return to normal life?

Are you disappointed about the gifts you received?

Do you think others are disappointed with you

in light of what you (excuse me, with what Santa) gave them?

Are you changed?

Are you uplifted?

Is your spirit newly inspired, enlightened?

Are you in a better place as far your relationship with God

and trusting in divine providence

and knowing God's will for your life

and feeling loved by God

and feeling that you contributed to the good of others?

Why do I ask these questions?

Because today's feast day,

the Epiphany of the Lord,

is about bringing our experience of Christmas to the world.

It's about the manifestation of Jesus Christ to the world.

The Magi, the three kings, foreigners and non-Jews,

were led to Jesus by the light of a star.

The Church, you and I, we are the star in today's world;

the light that leads the way to Jesus Christ.

The gift of his life is not reserved for a few.

It is meant for all.

So tell me, would you like your experience of Christmas this year

to be the universal experience of Christmas?

Put another way,

do you think you can convince or influence non-believers

to accept Jesus Christ into their lives

based upon your experience this Christmas?

And there it is.

One of the desired outcomes of our Christmas celebration
 is to help the world see that the Savior, the Messiah
 is born into our midst.
 And if this isn't your experience,
 if this isn't what a non-believing world saw through us,
 then how will the message of Christianity
 spread to all corners of the world?
 Now you may say "well, that's not my concern".
 And that's exactly why the Church schedules this day
 into the Christmas season.
 It surely was Jesus' concern.
 And if his concerns aren't our concerns
 then what is our purpose for being Catholic,
 for being Christian?
 Is it just to hedge our bets
 so that when it comes time,
 we will be welcomed into heaven?
 That seems a mite selfish.
 You know... "I'll take what you give O Lord,
 your forgiveness, your love, your grace,
 your mercy, your kindness, your blessings...
 I'll take what I need
 but I'm not concerned about giving a share of what I received to others."
 I don't know about you,
 but I usually don't have positive feelings
 towards people who take all the time but never give.

Obedience to Jesus Christ

requires that his message be proclaimed to all people
 and all nations,
 and not just to a select few.
 Salvation is more than the private matter of the soul.
 It is a matter of bringing enlightenment and healing
 to all social and cultural structures in existence.
 All nations and all people are included in the history of Salvation.
 God intervened in human history,
 not just in Jewish history.
 The mission of Jesus Christ,
 the mission of the Holy Spirit
 is to bring divine goodness to the whole world.
 God created all people.
 It is His desire to save all people.
 There is only one race...and that is the human race.
 The Gospel is a call to all people
 to share in the glory of God,
 to share in His life.

We look at the world,
 we gaze into the future
 with our limited vision
 with our sin-prone minds
 and what do we see?

We see...
 dehumanization
 nuclear war
 overpopulation
 depletion of resources
 extinction of species.
 Some see invasion from outer space.
 The majority of us don't see life getting better...
 we see things getting worse.

When Jesus looked at the world,
 when he gazed into the future
 he saw something different.
 He saw the coming of a new age;
 He saw a Kingdom of universal peace.
 He saw the end of sin and death and darkness.
 He saw humanity as one body, one people, one family.
 He saw that the division caused by human pride,
 by hatred and prejudice,
 the confusion and chaos caused by the Tower of Babel...
 he saw a world where these divisions
 were healed and all people are reunited by divine love,
 his love.

Today,
 the Epiphany,
 where Jesus is recognized and worshiped by Gentiles,
 is meant to be like a trumpet blast to Christians;
 it is meant to rally the forces of the faithful,
 so as to invite all of humanity
 to walk the narrow path of the cross...
 to spread everywhere the reign of Christ...
 so as to prepare the way for his 2nd coming.
 Do we long to see that day when all nations and all peoples
 will recognize Jesus Christ as the Son of God
 and will bow down before him
 offering to him the gift of their lives,
 uniting themselves to his purpose?

There is a big picture, a very big picture,
 hard to see with human eyes
 but surely presented to us through the eyes of God.
 It takes faith to believe that God's future is possible.
 May we be blessed with such faith.

Today's prayer: "O Lord, Redeemer of the Universe, it is Your plan, Your design, that all people be saved from the death of sin. May we, Your children, both experience and promote the truth of Your Son Jesus Christ and bring his love to the ends of the earth. Amen!"