

My friends in Christ, today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Epiphany, and this celebration commemorates the revelation – the *epiphany* – of Christ the Lord (the God-made-man) to the world of the Gentiles, represented by the Magi of the East. We may reflect upon the shepherds who went in haste to behold the Christ Child as representing the world of the Jews when Christ was born, the Jews being the chosen people whom God had planned to be the shepherds, as it were, of the entire world with regard to right worship of the one true God. And the Magi then represent the Gentiles, the *rest* of the world, and our innermost yearning to behold the face of God...the Magi, who – like the shepherds – also were drawn mysteriously to the Christ Child.

The entire story of that first Christmas – and our yearly celebration of Christmas – really is not only the story of the Incarnation – the human birth of the divine Lord – but it is also the story of a soul – *our* souls – and our *own* yearning for and pilgrim's journey toward Christ the Lord. For the Magi sought the Christ Child from hundreds (and maybe even *thousands*) of miles away, having traversed afar through field and fountain, moor and mountain.

And *we*...we, *too*, seek the Lord – through the passage of time, the living of life, with days, months, years, our whole lives devoted in faith and prayer – constantly seeking the Lord while He may be found. The Magi suffered the hardship of difficult travel over all kinds of terrain; we, too, suffer hardships – spiritual hardships of anger, confusion, loss, doubt, and despair.

But despite the hardships which the Magi surely suffered, they persevered, and they found the star rising in the East, the splendor of the Lord shining for all the world to see; and thus given new hope, they persevered. And we, *too* – when *we* persevere – are blessed to behold the splendor and glory of the Lord shining for all our *souls* to see.

This story of our souls sometimes arrives at the happy ending of our souls finding the Lord right where the Lord wills to be found: in our hearts; in our lives of faith, celebrated in the Church; in our lives of faith, lived out and put into practice through our moral living out there in the world.

But sometimes, the story of the soul arrives at dark places, where a soul seeking desperately to satisfy that profound longing for *something* – for that great and mysterious *we-know-not-what*, which is the object of our every wish and desire – finds instead *not* God but in fact anything *but* God. We know the usual suspects, of course – the horrifying snares which trap souls looking to fill that God-shaped hole in their empty lives with things that are *not* God: drugs and alcohol and gambling and pornography – vices that quickly devolve from mere “bad habits” to full-blown addictions. People look to other things, too, of course – more “normal” things which, though normal, are nonetheless made into idols and thus become *not* something that *we* control but rather what controls us: sports, video games, television, social media, and other activities and gadgetry that distract us with artificial fulfillment as we while away our lives ignoring the one and only thing that can ever possibly fill that God-shaped hole in our lives: God.

But the story of *our* souls hopefully will always be the story of the Magi: a constant yearning to seek the Lord Himself – Christ above all else...Christ and none other...Christ and Him alone. It is Christ – God-made-man – whom the Magi sought, whom the Magi found. And those Magi from the East (“we three kings”) – they certainly could have left well enough alone; they easily could have abandoned themselves completely to the distractions of their own wealthy, comfortable lives. After all, why traverse afar – hundreds (and maybe even *thousands*) of miles – through all kinds of dreadful terrain, in all kinds of climate and weather – why do all that just to find some random Child in some small po-dunk town in a desert when they already had all that they could ever possibly want – being kings and all, wealthy and comfortable? And yet...they did it anyway, come what may. Because for all of their wealth and comfort, they recognized that they had an innermost yearning for something, for the great and mysterious we-know-not-what – and they knew that the God-shaped hole in their lives could only be filled with God.

And that is the story of the soul, of *our* souls. And note that God willed to be found by the Magi, by the shepherds, by *all* of us...in the little town of Bethlehem – a Jewish word meaning “the

house of bread.” A house of bread for the Bread of Life. A house of bread for Him Who gives of Himself to us in the Eucharist. Such wondrous providence! What a marvel for us that the story of the Magi, the story of our souls, should feature our holy yearning, our constant seeking, to have the God-shaped hole in our lives be filled with God...that this yearning would be satisfied, our seeking come to the end...at the house of bread...in the Eucharist. For the Eucharist *is* Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ *is* God – the one, true God Whom we seek and Who alone satisfies our holy yearning.

If we truly do desire for our every longing for happiness to be fulfilled, then seek the Lord; and if we truly do seek the Lord, then look no further than the Eucharist, the Bread of Life: Christ the Lord – born for us on Christmas day; glorified by the angels and the heavenly host; received by the shepherds; found by the Magi and – *hopefully!* – our own souls. Seek the Lord, behold the Lord, and give yourselves again – pledge yourselves anew – only to the Lord and to Him alone. And just as the Magi offered Him those famous gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, so *we* offer Him gifts of the gold of our sacred love for Him, the frankincense of our constant prayers to Him, the myrrh of our sorrows and sufferings for Him – the gold of love for the grace and mercy that He has given us, the frankincense of prayer for the joys and bliss of life everlasting which He has prepared for us, and the myrrh of the sorrow for sins committed and sufferings endured, for the glorious majesty of God. For the story of our souls – our own pilgrim’s journey of faith here on Earth – really only has but one happy ending: our own happiness (the fulfillment of our deepest desire), which can only be had in Christ the Lord and in Him alone. “Seek the Lord,” therefore, “while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.” Strive to have that God-shaped hole filled with God alone. And may it be that this, our holy endeavor, will be richly rewarded with life eternal in halls of heavenly realms where the angels sing glory and the saints rejoice...where our souls finally will find rest...and where God alone, forever and ever, is given praise.