

Gospel for 7 January: Power of the Gospel

Gospel for January 7th, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 4:12-17.23-25*)

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth he went and dwelt in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

“The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,

toward the sea, across the Jordan,

Galilee of the Gentiles—

the people who sat in darkness

have seen a great light,

and for those who sat in the region
and shadow of death

light has dawned.”

From that time Jesus began to
preach, saying, “Repent, for the
kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

And he went about all Galilee,
teaching in their synagogues and
preaching the gospel of the kingdom
and healing every disease and every
infirmity among the people. So his
fame spread throughout all Syria,
and they brought him all the sick,
those afflicted with various diseases
and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and
paralytics, and he healed them. And
great crowds followed him from
Galilee and the Decapolis and

Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.

Commentary

When we celebrate the Epiphany of our Lord, we see some wise men from the East who, after recognizing the star of the King of the Jews, decide to go out in search of the Light of the world. They found him in a humble place: in the small town of Bethlehem. But they realized right away that they had found this Light. The prophet Isaiah had spoken about the Light that would dispel all darkness and fulfil the deepest hopes residing in every human heart. The Gospel for today's Mass tells us again about that Light, about Jesus, who begins preaching in the Galilee of the Gentiles, in Capernaum, to illumine those who lay in the land of death.

Light is a requirement for life. In Galilee pagan gods had been worshiped. But those gods were incapable of giving life, of bringing light, of satisfying human hearts. The absence of the true God, of the living God, always plunges one into a darkness that, although it may appear to be light, in reality only encloses one in oneself. Christ came to show us the path of life, and he did so with signs and words, with healings that are a symbol of a new life that overcomes the limitations of illness and death, and with the good news of the Gospel message.

Christmas is an especially appropriate time to focus on what is decisive, on the Light that we see in Bethlehem, and to realize that everything else is only of relative importance, as when in a church the strongest light shines on the tabernacle. There we find the food that transforms us, that gives Life. In

the Word proclaimed at Mass, we experience the power of the Gospel that opens hearts, illuminates the mind and strengthens the will, filling us with greater hope and charity. It is a Word that, under its humble appearance, contains a divine strength. The wise men from the East were attentive to the signs in the heavens and found the Light. This attention requires conversion. And this is what we are invited to do today. Only a clean heart filled with desires can, when listening to the Word, encounter the Light all men and women are seeking.
