

Meditations: Epiphany

Some reflections that can assist our prayer on the great feast of Christ's manifestation to the nations.

- The Magi represent all nations
- Bringing Redemption to all souls
- Giving light with our own life.

“NOT TOO LONG AGO, Saint Josemaría said, “I was admiring a marble bas-relief representing the adoration of the Child Jesus by the Magi. In the frame around this bas-relief were other figures: four angels,

each with a symbol: a diadem, the world crowned by the cross, a sword and a sceptre. In this graphic way, using well-known symbols, the event we commemorate today was illustrated: some wise men – tradition says they were kings – come to prostrate themselves before a Child, after having asked in Jerusalem, *Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? (Mt 2:2).*”^[1]

“Epiphany” means apparition or manifestation. We celebrate with joy the manifestation of Christ to all nations, represented by these Magi arriving from the East. After the shepherds, our Lord makes himself known to these mysterious characters. In the Epiphany, God presents his Son “to the nations by the guidance of a star.”^[2] We discover “the glory of a God who has come for everyone: every nation, language and people is welcomed and loved by him. It is symbolized by the light,

which penetrates and illuminates all things.”^[3] The newborn child is the Messiah promised to the Israelites, but his redemptive mission extends to all the peoples of the earth. “We celebrate Christ, the destination of the pilgrimage of peoples in search of salvation.”^[4]

The Gospel tells us that the Magi, *going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him (Mt 2:11)*. In their worship we see represented millions of people from every corner of the earth who have set out, called by God, to worship Christ. This is the full meaning of Isaiah’s prophecy: *Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you (Is 60:1)*. The prophet addresses his voice to the holy city, a figure of the Church, the new Jerusalem, the light of the nations. Kings and peoples will come from far and wide, attracted by the

radiance of her glory. As mother and teacher of all peoples, the Church welcomes them into her bosom and presents them as a precious dowry to Christ.

MORE THAN TWENTY CENTURIES HAVE GONE BY since the adoration of the Magi and that long procession of people from all over the world has only just begun. *All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you (Ps 22:27)*. The evangelising work of the first Christians was very deep. They spread the faith throughout the whole known world, sowing abundantly, and the fruits were not long in coming. Since then, new peoples have come – and continue to come – to Jesus and Mary. In the same way, we too have come, from all latitudes, from all races and languages. *Lift up your eyes all round, and see they all gather together, they*

come to you; your sons shall come from afar (Is 60:4).

“We need to keep repeating again and again,” Saint Josemaría stressed, “that Jesus did not confine himself to a group of privileged people; he came to reveal to us that God’s love is for everyone. All men and women are loved by God, and he looks for love from all. From everyone, whatever his or her personal situation, social position, profession or trade. Ordinary everyday life is not something of little value: all the paths of the earth can be an opportunity for meeting Christ, who calls us to identify ourselves with him, so as to carry out his divine mission – in the place where we are. God calls us through the ins and outs of daily life, in the sufferings and joys of the people we live with, in the human interests of our colleagues and in the tiny things that make up our family life. God also calls us

through the great problems, conflicts and challenges of each period of history, which attract the effort and idealism of a large part of mankind.”^[5]

Our mission is the same as that of those early Christians: “My children, we are here to help the crowd, the multitude. There is no soul we do not want to love and help. We must become all things to all people: *ómnibus ómnia factus sum (1 Cor 9:22)*. We cannot turn our backs on any concern, on any human need.”^[6]

We too have seen the star. And our Lord wishes to reach every soul, through each one of us, to offer everyone his consolation and salvation.

IN THE PREFACE for today’s Mass, we will pray: “In Christ, light of the peoples, you have revealed to the peoples the mystery of our salvation.” We wish to assist in the

work of Redemption. Saint John Paul II pointed out that “an overall view of the human race shows that this mission is still only beginning.”^[7] We live secure in the hope that this Child is the true light of the world, a light that shines in humility. And, in a certain way, we want to resemble the star of the Magi in order to show the way that leads to God.

“Where is the King?” Saint Josemaría asked on the feast of the Epiphany in 1956. “Could it not be that Jesus wants to reign above all in men’s hearts, in your heart? That is why he has become a Child, for who can help loving a little baby? Where then is the King? Where is the Christ, whom the Holy Spirit wants to fashion in our soul? He cannot be present in the pride that separates us from God, or in the lack of charity which isolates us from others. Christ cannot be there; there man is left on his own. As you kneel at the feet of the Child

Jesus on the day of the Epiphany, before a King bearing none of the outward signs of royalty, you can tell him: Lord, take away my pride; break my self-love, my desire to affirm myself and to impose myself on others. Make the foundation of my personality my identification with you.”^[8] —

On this great day we lovingly look to Bethlehem, to learn from those men from the East who prostrated themselves before the Child. Taking the Magi as our model, we tell Jesus that, with his help, we will not put obstacles in the way of his redemptive will. We ask Mary to teach us to be a light for our family and friends. We also ask her for humility so that Christ may live in our hearts and, identified with Him, we will draw many men and women to his redeeming love.

^[1] Saint Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, 31.

^[2] Epiphany of the Lord, Mass of the Day, *Collect*.

^[3] Pope Francis, Homily, 6 January 2019.

^[4] Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, 6 January 2007.

^[5] Saint Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, 110.

^[6] Saint Josemaría, *Letter 6 May 1945*, 42.

^[7] Saint John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, 1.

^[8] Saint Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, 31.

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