

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

HAVE YOU SEEN THE STAR?

SUNDAY READINGS:

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalms 72: 2, 78, 10-13

Ephesians 3: 2-3a, 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12

COMMENTARY

The feast of the Epiphany opens our imagination to understand the wisdom of this event as Scripture tells us. If you haven't already, read below, my commentary for the Gospel, in which I begin this questioning of the Magi story. The star leads the Magi from distant lands only to disappear as they approached Jerusalem.

If it had led them to Bethlehem, they would not have told Herod about the new born king. Herod would not have involved the chief priests and scribes to determine where this so called king would be born. Herod's malicious plan to murder all male children two years and younger would not have happened. All this develops because the wisemen, who are Gentiles and not Jewish men, become the key element in how Jesus is saved from the sword, while so many other mothers lose their sons on that night.

Thinking like this helps us to understand that the whole Christmas story cannot be romanticized as we look upon our crib scenes and see the purity of it; the quaintness of the cute donkey and cow, and forget the machinations that were occurring with the one desire to kill Jesus the Son of God. The other important point of understanding is to trust God who knows

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what life is about. We know that God's time is not ours and sometimes it is difficult to be faithful and at peace at the same time. A friend once told me, don't be angry nor passive when evil occurs, but be indignant, so that positive energy can be used to confront evil.

Perhaps all this came to my mind this year because of the horrible situation facing the immigrants in our country now. Children may not see their father or their mother again. An adolescent was asked recently by a reporter what she wanted for Christmas and you know the response, "I just want my Dad to come home."

There are modern day Herods in our midst who claim to only be desirous of protecting all citizens. Separating families for no legal reason is not an act of protection, but of destruction. And yet life continues on in spite of the darkness that surrounds us because we have promises from God that will be fulfilled: "Rise up in splendor...! Your light has come..." "Justice shall flower in his days, and profound peace, till the moon be no more." We only need seek the Word of God for wisdom and strength to remain faithful during these seemingly hopeless days. As we continue journeying during this holy season of Christmas, God's word and the special feast days to come, will hopefully strengthen us with indignation to confront the evil surrounding us, as well bring peace to our broken world. Have you seen the star in the sky? Are you following it?

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading - Isaiah 60:1-6: The reality of God's glory is so powerful in this passage from Isaiah. Divine light covers all of creation. As we read it or hear its proclamation, deep hope arises in us once again. Just as the Jewish people received the promises of the Lord, they were fulfilled with divine glory. Many people did not understand the way that God fulfilled his word, but none the less, the darkness was lifted. Our hope continues to grow as we beg our God to change the hearts of those who hold power and wealth so that our darkness may dissipate forever.

Responsorial Psalm - Psalm 72: 2, 78, 10-13: The psalmist recounts the many wonders that the power of God has done not only for Israel, but for the surrounding countries. A common theme in the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament is the care for the poor and the afflicted. Even though they do not have the gifts that kings present, they are the favored by God at all times.

Second Reading - Ephesians 3: 2-3a, 5-6: St. Paul's letter continues with the theme of God's grace and power that brings light and understanding to all including the Gentiles, and other nations who are not Jewish and do not follow the Jewish laws and precepts. It is Jesus whose teachings are in the Gospel, but also in the promise that comes through him.

Gospel - Matthew 2:1-12: This well-known Gospel passage has some interesting components which leaves room for further reflection. God's creation, the star, has guided the Magi from their home countries and somehow disappears when they approach Jerusalem. It did not take them directly to Bethlehem. They must have presumed that the son of a king would have to be in a palace, so they seek out King Herod. It is the temple authorities that speak of the Scriptures and Bethlehem. It is Herod who sends the Magi to Bethlehem where the star reappears. Why didn't the star take them directly to Bethlehem? God's ways are not our ways. The challenge is to embrace God's ways without knowing why.

Notes and Commentary by Sr. Nancy Schramm, OSF. Sr. Nancy is a past-president of the USCMA and currently serves in a small rural parish. She also serves her religious community on various committees. She is a spiritual director and translates for other groups in Portuguese.

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