

1/5/2020

Epiphany of the Lord

Manifesting God's image in us

One of my resolutions this year is to make sure you know the themes I will be preaching about during the month. This helps you to prepare your mind to be able to engage with the word of God as it comes. This week the focus of my homily is on the initial steps that is required to be taken towards our goals. I chose this theme because we are just at the beginning of the New Year and we need those initial steps if we are to get anywhere with our resolutions. Those resolutions we made require the initial steps to set them in motion. For instance, if your resolution was about taking your exercises seriously, it will be so important to take your first steps and stay committed to it. If you decided to check your diet this year don't wait till the season of lent when the fish fries begin, commit to some initial steps such as planning a new menu and shopping right. If your resolution is about your prayer life please take the first step, perhaps set your prayer time as your first step and keep to it. A journey of 1000 miles always begins with a step!

The story of the magi in the gospel of Matthew is about a group of wise men from the east who took their initial steps to discover the one who's star they had observed at its rising. It's a story of how eventually they came to recognize the newborn king in Mary's son born in the manger. What strikes at the core of the story of the magi is what they discovered. They found God's only begotten Son, clothed in swaddling clothes, a baby not born in a palace but in the poorest of human conditions. Yet, that did not blind the wise men from recognizing the mystery of God in that baby. Jesus entered our humanity to redeem God's image in us so that it could shine forth in splendor and glory. He chose the very lowest of human society to show us that God identifies with even the least among human beings. We are all God's image and likeness! After the fall of man, it was difficult for man to recognize his own blood. Pride and selfishness blind his eyes. Man exploited another man to feel strong. Cain will kill his brother, Abel and when asked would respond am 'I my brother's keeper' (Gen 4:9), a lawyer who wanted to justify himself would ask Jesus who is my neighbor? (Luke 10:29). The mystery of the incarnation invites us to recognize how we are the image of God in the world.

The magi (astrologers) followed the star to the place where the incarnate son had been born. They rejoiced at the re/appearance of the star and adored the Lord when they finally got to

see him. They opened their treasures and offered him the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Probably this is the resources they relied on when they went to Egypt as refugees running away from Herod who gets angry with even little children and whose wickedness is not spared the shame of harming and killing the defenseless. Our search for God must begin from the point where we recognize man as God's image and likeness and open our treasures of God-given gifts to support, help and assist man to brighten the glorious image of God in all.

The question of God (divinity) and man (humanity) merges in the child Jesus. In God's son born for us at Christmas, God has descended the high mountain to cloth himself with frail humanity in order to redeem us. God has become a child in need of love and protection. In Matthew 25 Jesus says what you do for the least of my brothers you do unto me. Jesus says 'I was in prison you did not visit me, I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you gave me no welcome. And they will ask him when did we see you hungry and thirsty and naked and a stranger and he will say unto them as you did not do to the least of my brethren you did not do it unto me.

So let us now arise, and take our initial steps to recognize God's image in ourselves and in our neighbor. Let us reach out to all as we would Christ.

Fr. Francis Odoom