
Who Do You Worship?



Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: “And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel”. Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.”

After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. (Matt 2:1-12)

The story of the Magi coming to Jesus is another well known story from the Gospel. At the center of it is the newborn child. The main ‘characters’ are: the star, the magi, Herod, and the priests. The star leads to Jesus. The Magi are in search of truth. Herod wants to destroy the child. The priests are indifferent.

Leading to Jesus

The main purpose of Christian life is to lead others to Jesus. "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Mission means sharing our faith. We talk a lot about option for the poor, dialog with cultures, and inter-religious dialog. How about those billions of ordinary

people who cannot imitate the Magi in their journey to Bethlehem? They also long to hear Glad Tidings of our Lord Jesus. Even if it is not politically correct, even if it is dangerous, we should never confine ourselves to the premises of our churches. It is through us, through our lives, words, and deeds, that Jesus wants to manifest Himself to the nations.

The Magi

An elderly Catholic lady was traveling home. While crossing the Irrawaddy Delta, she met a Buddhist woman, a victim of the cyclone Nargis. Nothing could be done for her. The family was bringing her from a hospital in Yangon back home. The dying woman saw the image of Jesus carried by the old lady.

“Is that the living God?” - she asked.

“Yes. This is the icon of the Merciful Jesus.” - was the response.

“Please! Tell me something about Him.”

The Christian lady spoke about God’s love revealed to the world in Jesus, forgiveness of sin, and new life promised to all who believe in Him. The dying woman was listening with eagerness and as the journey was nearing the end, she asked: “Can you baptize me?”

It was later reported that the newly baptized woman spent her last hours singing and praising the name of Jesus.

The world is full of people searching for truth, for meaning of life, for God. Today’s magi come from all walks of life. They would do everything to get to Bethlehem. Nothing daunts them, because they sense that truth will set them free.

Herod

Herod was a cruel and mentally sick man. He murdered his wife and his three sons suspecting them of treason. He ordered the imprisonment of the most distinguished citizens of Jerusalem to be killed at the moment of his death. In the Gospel story, he tries to use the Magi as his spies, so he can get hold of the newborn Messiah.

Obsession makes us blind. We lose perspective. Power, money, fame, become the aim of our lives. At their altar some people have sacrificed the most valuable things God has offered us: love and conscience. Love enables us to sacrifice our lives for the sake of others. Conscience prevents us from sacrificing others for our selfish gain. If we lose them we stop to be human. Unfortunately, there is always someone who wants to kill the truth.

Priests

Socrates was wrong presuming that knowledge leads to action. The priests knew the Scripture well and with ease quoted the prophet Micah (Matt 2:5-6). Yet, they remained indifferent. They did not go with the Magi to pay homage to Jesus. Moreover, in the course of Jesus’ ministry they were his greatest opponents.

Knowledge gives information but not transformation. Knowledge often puffs up. If your knowledge does not bring you to the truth, if it does not make your life meaningful, then you have wasted your time in school. “If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know” (1 Cor 8:2). Unfortunately, the world has too many experts filled with all sorts of information but whose hearts are empty.

Conclusion

“And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him” (Matt 2:11). The Magi coming from the East fell upon their knees and touched the ground with their forehead before Jesus. Matthew uses this expression for worship three more times. After calming the sea, the disciples fell on their knees expressing their faith: “Truly, you are the Son of God” (Matt 14:33). Then, the women (Matt 28:9) and the disciples (Matt 28:17) worshiped the risen Jesus. Whom do we worship? Before whom do we prostrate ourselves? The answer will determine the direction of our lives.

May God bless all of you who remember us in prayer and support our ministry here.