

My Dear people of God,
Happy Christmas!

Yes it is still Christmas, we are still in the season of Christmas. We marvel at God's love and saving presence in Christ Jesus our Lord. He is Emmanuel, God with us.

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Epiphany. The Christmas season reaches an apex on this Solemnity of the Epiphany. Traditionally known in many parts of the world as Little Christmas, it is a commemoration of the manifestation of God to all the nations. In some liturgical traditions, the feast of the Epiphany is the central celebration of Christmas. It commemorates not only the birth of Christ and the visit of the Magi but also his baptism in the Jordan and the manifestation of His glory at the wedding feast of Cana.

In our Roman Catholic tradition, the focus is on the first of these commemorations, namely the visit of the Magi and the implications of that visit for the glorious manifestation of God to all the peoples of the world. The readings of this Sunday therefore highlight the importance of this manifestation. Three themes dominate in a special way: Jerusalem is the source of light for the nations; Jesus Christ is the revelation of God to all the nations and; new relationships are established in Christ between the Jews and the Gentiles.

Jerusalem Is the Source of Light: There is a wonderful summons to alertness and presence of mind and heart, a call for all nations to witness the marvelous works of God, which shine as light in midst of the surrounding darkness. This is no ordinary light. It is a light that has God's Holy City Jerusalem as its source. The people of Israel have enjoyed the radiance of God's glory and are now set as a beacon for the nations. All the ends of the earth can witness the wonder of God's light in the midst of the city, its people, its rulers and its way of life.

The Light of God is known in the ways in which the most vulnerable in the city are cared for and acknowledged. In just action and righteousness the city becomes a beacon of God, and all the nations are attracted by this light. The quality of the light leads the way through the darkness and sustains the world in goodness and peace.

Christ as Light to the Nations: Led by the star, the astrologers come in search of the infant king. They have been attentive to the marvels of the universe, and there they have read signs in the heavens. They represent all who search for truth in the wonders of creation and in the wisdom of their own cultures of origin. Because they searched with eyes of faith they were able to recognize the gift of God when they found him, even though He did not conform to their initial perception of an earthly royal heir. They came from the far corners of the earth, Gentiles who followed the and who found the new king whose reign would bring justice and righteousness into human affairs. They returned home, enlightened by their visit to God's place of revelation. Their encounter shows that in Christ, the light of God is given to all people of goodwill, Jew and non-Jew alike.

The New Relationships Between Jew and Gentile: The manifestation of God among us changes the way we perceive one another. The birth of Jesus Christ provides us with the light by which we see a new criterion for relating. The Magi who come in

faith to worship the child Jesus represent the multi-ethnic and cultural diversity in civic and parish situations, as well as the many religions of the world. To us who are related no longer merely by blood affiliation or national origin, Jesus Christ offers the Spirit of holiness as the ground for our relationships. This new universal belonging will be manifest in the community of believers who live no longer in darkness or exclusivity and sin but by a new dispensation of grace. All people, regardless of race or ethnic origin, can be co-heirs with Christ.

Happy Christmas and Happy Epiphany.

God bless,

Fr Simon Peter