

THE SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Matthew 2: 1-12

Yesterday we celebrated the Epiphany of the Lord. The basic story behind all this is the journey of the Magi who were astrologers from the East. In that story you can read about the two contrasting responses to the news that the long awaited Jewish Messiah had just been born.

On one hand, we have the astrologers who were so excited by this news that they set out on a long journey to find the child so as to pay him homage. On the other hand, we have King Herod in Jerusalem was so perturbed by the same news that he sought to kill the child. What excites one person can trouble another person. Of course the feast of the Epiphany invites us to identify with the response of the astrologers. Their great openness to God's presence in the world has something to teach us. These magi, were people who were very observant of God's natural world, in particular that part of God's natural world that came into view when darkness descended. They observed and studied the stars. They were fascinated by the stars. Yet, they recognized that the stars, for all their splendour, pointed beyond themselves to some more wonderful reality, to God. So, when they heard that God was visiting our world in a new way through a child who had just been born, they set out on a journey to search for that child, following one special star. These exotic figures from the East show us how being attentive to God's natural world can draw us closer to God. This can happen in different ways for different people. For the wise men it was their fascination with the stars that led them to the true light of the world. For others, the sea can have a similar impact, revealing in some mysterious way the depth and power of God. Forests and vegetation can speak volumes to others about God. God can speak to us in a variety of ways through the world of nature. The wise men teach us to be attentive and observant of God's natural world, so that in and through it we may experience the presence of the living God.

Having been guided by the presence of God in nature, the wise men came face to face with God in the form of a child newly born to a young couple. The wise men did not worship the star. They did not worship the created order. But they did worship the child, because they recognized that here in these simple surroundings was Emmanuel, God-with-us. We too worship Emmanuel, and we do so in a special way every time we celebrate the Eucharist. The magi only came to Bethlehem once. We come to the Eucharist often and even in these locked down conditions we follow online Masses often enough. We do so because, like the magi, we are seekers. We come to the Eucharist to seek the Lord. We want to know him more clearly, to love him more dearly and to follow him more nearly. Our seeking of the Lord is a response to his seeking of us, his calling out to us. We pray at his time of the Epiphany that we would be as responsive to the Lord's call as the wise men from the East were.