

Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord (1/06/10 – *Christ Epiphanied For Us*)

In the Name JESUS. [Amen]

Tonight, as we continue in this *Festival Half of the Church Year*, we move seamlessly ... almost imperceptibly at first ... from *The Feast of the Nativity* – the Twelve Days of *Christmas* – to *The Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord*. Tonight we celebrate another glorious event in the Infant life of the eternal Son of God, our Savior. Tonight we return to Bethlehem once more as our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed to the Magi – to the Wise Men ... Gentiles ... from the East. Tonight the Church begins that time of the Church Year in which the Son of God born in human flesh to bring *peace on earth and goodwill toward men* [LK 2.14] is manifest to non-Jews as *He Who has been born King of the Jews* [MT 2.2]. This is the Gentile Christmas – as it is sometimes referred to – **our** Christmas. He Who has come as *the glory of His people Israel* has come also as *a Light to lighten the Gentiles* [LK 2.32] ... that is, a Light to reveal salvation to all the nations – for Jesus came to be Jesus for **all** people. Jesus came to save **all** people from their sins. And Jesus still comes to save people from their sins – or to speak more precisely: Jesus still comes to offer and apply to people the salvation He has won for them once-for-all.

And we have on this *Feast of the Epiphany* an epiphany – a revelation and manifestation and making known – of just how it is that God works ... and has always worked ... to bring salvation to light. You may not have noticed it in our *Holy Gospel* from ST. MATTHEW – but it's there.

The Wise Men from the East – who shall remain a mystery this side of heaven – get to Jesus by a miraculous manifestation in the sky. God has created a special star that leads them to Jerusalem ... and then later *came to rest over the place where the Child was* [MT 2.9]. Have you ever wondered why the star didn't just lead them right to Jesus in the first place? I suppose we might surmise that God leads the Magi to Jerusalem so that the capital city of His chosen people might come to know of this great event. And no doubt God does use this to spread to *Good Tidings of great joy which shall be to all people* [LK 2.10] – beyond the reaches of those blessed shepherds who were in the fields surrounding Bethlehem that glorious night of our Savior's birth. But there is another reason – a very important one ... one we do well to remember.

Even King Herod seems to know about it – which is amazing, really, considering our sinful flesh ... and especially Herod's sinful desire to quash anything and anyone that might impinge on his earthly power and authority ... even if it means killing untold innocent baby boys in the attempt. When the Magi

come to Herod with their question and announcement: *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* [Mt 2.2], Herod immediately called to himself *all the chief priests and scribes of the people* to inquire *of them where the Christ was to be born* [2.4]. How does Herod ... the chief priests and scribes ... the Wise Men – and how do we – learn the location of the Infant Jesus? **From the Word!** From the divinely inspired, written Word of God! Indeed, we may go so far as to say that **everything** that has to do with salvation ... **everything** that the Church has to say and do ... **everything** we may and ought and must believe ... **everything** comes from and through and by the Word. And apart from that Word there is no salvation.

So despite the miraculous star directly leading them the Magi will not come to Christ apart from the Word – the Word prophesied ... the Word written ... the Word proclaimed. They and we and all who believe have always and will always be drawn to Christ ... come to Christ by the Word. In like manner, it is always by the Word – in, with, and under the Word – that Christ the Word made Flesh is epiphanied ... revealed ... manifested ... made known to us.

So it is by the Word attached to the waters of Holy Baptism by our Lord's command and institution that you were brought into the Church – brought to Christ ... and Christ revealed to you. It is not by your own reason ... your own pondering ... your own striving ... nor that of any person – but by the Word revealing to you the Word made Flesh and the light of His Gospel work for your salvation.

So throughout this *Epiphany Season* you will hear by the Word *Christ Epiphanied For Us*. In His Holy Baptism it is by the Word preached by John and by the Word of the Father from heaven proclaiming: *You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased* [Lk 3.22] that Jesus the eternal Son made Flesh is epiphanied as Him Who opens heaven for us. It will be by the Word that Christ speaks – simple though it may seem – turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana [Jn 2] that the Man Jesus is epiphanied as the Creator Who still sustains heaven and earth. It is the Word given by the Holy Spirit to the Prophet Isaiah and read by Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth that the Son is epiphanied as the One Who proclaims the good news of the Gospel and works redemption and freedom from sin [Lk 4.16-30]. It is by the Word that Christ is epiphanied as the everlasting King Who evicts from His Kingdom and His people not only disease but unclean spirits and demons [Lk 4.31-44]. It is by His Word that Christ gives a miraculous catch of fish and makes sinners into Gospel-fishers of men [Lk 5.1-11]. And it is by the Word that Jesus is epiphanied in the fullness of His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration as He sets His face to go to Jerusalem and work our eternal salvation by His Cross and resurrection – thus revealing Himself as the

Chosen One Whose Word we must ever hear and heed that we may have life [LK 9.28-36].

So tonight on this– as we ponder *Christ Epiphanied For Us* – we speak the Word of God by which He is revealed as a gracious God Who has come in the Flesh to bring us forgiveness, life, and salvation. We sing the Word given to angels: *Peace on earth, goodwill to men*. We utter the Word eternally repeated by the six-winged seraphim, singing: *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth* and join in greeting the Son of David with loud *Hosannahs* as He enters to bring us salvation. And we eat the Bread of Life – laid first in the manger, and then down in the grave, and taken up again for you – as He is epiphanied for us according to His Word in, with, and under the bread and wine of the Sacrament ... for the forgiveness of all our sins.

This is *The Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord* – on which the glory of the LORD rises upon us to bring us once again out of the darkness of our sin and death into His marvelous light ... and to shower upon us gifts greater than the gold, frankincense, and myrrh the Wise men brought ... giving us forgiveness and eternal life.

In the Name of the FATHER and of the + SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]