

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we continue our celebration of this Christmas Season, today we commemorate the Feast of the Epiphany, the visitation of the Three Wise Men to the newborn king, the Messiah. Matthew's Gospel records that "magi from the East arrived in Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.'" Throughout history since the time of Jesus's birth, the Epiphany has been shrouded in mystery. Who were these men, what do we know about them and what was their motivation for traveling a far distance from home to have this encounter with the newborn king?

Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI offers an interesting insight in his book Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives. He writes, *"From all that has been said, we can obtain some sense of the outlook and the knowledge that prompted these men to set off in search of the newborn 'king of the Jews.' We could well say that they represent the religions moving toward Christ, as well as the self-transcendence of science toward him. In a way they are the successors of Abraham, who set off on a journey in response to God's call. In a sense, these figures are forerunners, preparers of the way, seekers after truth, such as we find in every age.*

*The key point is this: the wise men from the east are a new beginning. They represent the journeying of humanity toward Christ. They initiate a procession that continues throughout history. Not only do they represent the people who have found the way to Christ: they represent the inner aspiration of the human spirit, the dynamism of religions and human reason toward him."*

The idea of the Magi representing the inner aspiration of the human spirit is a sentiment each of us can identify with us on our individual and communitarian spiritual journey. We can appreciate the desire of the Magi to get outside of themselves and reach for something and someone transcending their workaday world. We gather that they were men of substantial knowledge. Should this not have been sufficient to satisfy their ambition and thirst for knowledge? That they realized that they had not yet found the truth they were seeking was a stance of profound humility. They recognized that what they had was insufficient, only a part of the sum total. This would be complete in their encounter with Jesus Christ, to whom they paid homage on bended knee. In Him, they came to know the fullness of knowledge for the first time. That is the Christian experience - having a personal encounter with the Lord and being irrevocably changed because of such grace.

My prayer for each of us this new year is that we continue ardently seeking the truth, the truth which expresses the fullness of love; the truth which sets free all who are imprisoned and alienated; a truth that binds up wounds; a truth that brings forgiveness and reconciliation; a truth so inexpressible in its joy that we want to spread that Good News to all whom we encounter.