

EPIPHANY (B-3) (Translation) **Symbols to imitate...**

If we truly study all the accounts of the Birth of Jesus, we will note that there are many symbols that make sense after studying his life. For example, there was a star, an unexplained bright light in the sky that astronomers interpreted as announcing the birth of a new king. The 3 magi, must have taken a while to travel to Jerusalem. Jesus had already been born. The magi asked Herod: “Where is the new born king of the Jews?” They came prepared, loaded to bear, with gifts fit for a king.

Lo and behold, they had to be surprised to find Jesus, Mary and Joseph in a cave/stable. Imagine the scene! He is born into poverty! He is sleeping in a feeding trough. Yet, undaunted, the magi recognize in the child the future of Israel, and so they knelt in homage.

So, if we look at the other symbols: the cave/stable, the manger, the animals, the magi themselves, the earlier arrival of shepherds, we get a glimpse into Jesus’ future mission: he came in poverty, so his option for the poor was assured; he was put into a manger, a feeding trough, so he announces that he is here to feed us all; the magi symbolize that Jesus came for the whole world, not just the Jews; they brought gifts made for a king, for someone who is holy, and a healer, so gold, frankincense and myrrh are appropriate for this type of king.

Herod knew how long it took to travel in those days and so he ordered all children under 2 to be killed. So the Holy Family began as refugees, immigrating to Egypt, to await the all-clear message from an angel, for them to return, no longer to Bethlehem, but to Nazareth.

Today is the Epiphany, the manifestation of the presence of God. This manifestation is the gift called Emmanuel, “God-with-us.” Christ is also “God-like-us.” God shows God’s presence in our lives in many ways. God gave us talents, gifts and strengths to be shared, not hoarded. We show our gratitude in the way we share what God gave us with the world.

Looking at our own lives as Christians, let us go through the symbols of Christmas and apply them in our own lives. Jesus calls us “Light of the world,” are our lives like that star, drawing people to come and see? He calls us his body. Are we truly the body of Christ, willing to feed others with what they desperately need: love? Christ came into poverty and rapidly became a refugee, an immigrant, a threat to the established way of life. How do we treat the refugees, the immigrants, and the prophets, meaning those who are threats to those in authority? Would Christ be proud of what we have learned and applied.

Do our lives show the gratitude we feel for having God-with-us and God-like-us in our midst? The easiest way to show our love and gratitude is to give our time. God-with-us shares his time and presence with us, because God loves us. We share in our godliness by serving, by sharing our time and presence with the world, especially with those the world disdains as poor and punished by God. Do we really share this way? If so, we are epiphanies of God’s presence in the world. If not, then we have snuffed out the light of our personal baptismal candles. The choice is always ours. Choose wisely!