

Homily for EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

[Is. 60:1-6; Eph. 3:2-3, 5-6; Mt. 2:1-12]

(Excerpts from Pope Benedict XVI – Address at WYD 2005)

by Father Charles Fillion

03 January 2021

Brothers and sisters,

many have described what we saw in December as the Christmas Star.
Was the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn
the Star that the Wise men from the East saw?

Well, I watch a show called “The Star of Bethlehem”.

It is available on the internet: <https://youtu.be/exmbuX1NffU>
I put in the link in my homily which you can find on the parish website.
The author, Rick Larson, walks us through biblical and historical clues
revealing the eternal significance of this celestial event
and he says its more Jupiter and Venus.

As you know, with technology, like the telescope Hubble and computers,
we are discovering a whole new Universe.

For two thousand years this star has fascinated us.

The Wise men, those who we call the three kings or magi,
the Gospel of Matthew do not say how many there were.

The Wise men is a term usually reserved for men learned in the sciences.

And since they came from the East,

Persia was the only country of any importance at that time.

Did they really exist?

In 2005, my last World Youth Day was in Cologne, Germany.

We find in their Cathedral the relics of the Three Wise Men.

In the Gospel, we hear that Herod and all of Jerusalem were frightened.

It because the Wise Men came with a calvary.

Announcing that they came to worship the new born king

meant trouble for Herod’s position and people did not want a war.

Now coming back to the star, it had to have lasted about two years

as Herod had killed children under two years old.

After all of the different explanation, <http://www.ldolphin.org/birth.html>

the only two planets that came together twice in one year

is Jupiter, the King planet and Venus, the Virgin Mother planet

in the constellation of Leo, which is the symbol for the tribe of Judah.

But it was not the birth of Jesus that the planets came together,

but for His **conception** on December 25.

If we celebrate his birth instead, it is because the first Christians celebrated the Jewish feast of Hanukkah - the Festival of Lights and later Constantine merged a few Roman & Pagan feasts, mainly the Roman feast of the birth of the 'New Sun' on December 25, at the time, the winter solstice-the longest night of the year.

You might feel a bit uneasy searching for signs in the stars.

Astrology is by definition a “form of divination based on the theory that the movement of the celestial bodies influence human affairs and determine the course of events”.

The Bible refers to the celestial objects as carrying signs from the Almighty.

But it prohibits worship of what we see above or even holding such things in too high regard.

The bottom line: we may look to the stars for signs from God, but we are not to revere the stars themselves.

Like a stop sign, it only gives us direction, not to be an idol to worship.

Today a lot of people look to their horoscopes to guide their lives.

As Christians, we have only one guide, one star, one light.

He is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The theme for the 2005 World Youth Day in Cologne was

“We have come to worship him”, from Matthew’s Gospel.

The wise men came to encounter a King in Bethlehem.

This little town less than six miles from Jerusalem is where they raise lambs be used for the Temple sacrifices.

Bethlehem means “house of bread”

and here we have Jesus being born in a manger, to giving himself as food on the altar.

If we think about it, this is precisely our experience when we share in the Eucharist.

For in every Mass, the liturgy of the Word introduces us

to our participation in the mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ and hence, introduces us to the Eucharistic Meal, to union with Christ.

Present on the altar is the One whom the Wise men saw lying in the manger:

Christ, the living Bread who came down from heaven to give life to the world, the true Lamb who gives his own life for the salvation of humanity.

The happiness that we are all seeking, has a name and a face:

it is Jesus of Nazareth, hidden in the Eucharist.

Only he gives the fullness of life to humanity!
With Mary, we say your own “yes” to God,
for he wishes to give himself to us.
Christ takes from us nothing that is beautiful and great,
but brings everything to perfection for the glory of God,
the happiness of men and women, and the salvation of the world.

The encounter with Jesus Christ allows us to experience in our hearts
the joy of his living and life-giving presence,
and enables us to bear witness to it before others.

Let our presence, where ever we are,
be the first sign and proclamation of the Gospel,
thanks to the witness of our actions and our joy.

Yes, we had a pretty rough year in 2020.
How is your vision?
Do we see better? Do we see with the eyes of God?
Or do we only see darkness and despair?

The star and the wise men are our guides to the light of Christ.
They direct us towards God himself: it is he who,
by the power of his grace, grants to weak human beings
the courage to bear witness to him before the world.

The relics of the wise men in the Cathedral of Cologne,
just as **all** of the saints, are traces of that **invisible** but real presence
which sheds light upon the shadows of the world
and reveals the Kingdom of Heaven in our midst.

In a few moments, you will hear the prayer over the gifts for today’s feast.
You will hear me pray: “Look with favor, Lord, we pray,
on these gifts of your Church,
in which are offered now not gold or frankincense or myrrh,
but he who by them is proclaimed, sacrificed and received, Jesus Christ”.

Yes, at the moment, many cannot receive because of the pandemic.
But when the times comes, I would like you to really see,
it is an honour first to come forward in the name of all the faithful,
to bring the gifts of bread and wine,
and to receive it as food as it will become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The greatest gift is ourselves.
As Christians, we imitate Christ.
We become the Body of Christ. We become Light for others.
May this new year be lived in the joy of God’s **living**
and **life-giving** presence.