



The Holy See

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

*Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 6 January 2019*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today, the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, is the celebration of the manifestation of Jesus, symbolized by light. In the prophetic texts this light is a *promise*: light is promised. Isaiah, in fact, addresses Jerusalem with these words: “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you” (60:1). The prophet’s invitation — to arise because the light has come — seems surprising, because it occurs in the aftermath of the harsh exile and of the numerous oppressions that the people have experienced.

Today this invitation also resonates for us, who have celebrated the Birth of Jesus, and it encourages us to allow ourselves to be reached by the light of Bethlehem. We too are invited not to stop at the outward signs of the event, but to set out from it once again and to undertake anew the experience of our journey as men and women, and as believers.

The light that the Prophet Isaiah had foretold, is *present* and *encountered* in the Gospel. And Jesus, born in Bethlehem, the City of David, has come to bring salvation to those near and far: to everyone. Matthew the Evangelist reveals various ways by which one can encounter Christ and react to his presence. For example, Herod and the scribes of Jerusalem have a hard heart, which obstinately refuses the visit of that Child. This is one possibility: to be closed to the light. They represent those who, even in our day, *fear* Jesus’ coming and close their heart to brothers and

sisters who need help. Herod is afraid of losing power and does not consider the true good of the people, but rather his own personal advantage. The scribes and the chief priests of the people are afraid because they do not know how to look beyond their own certainties; they are thus unable to understand the newness that is in Jesus.

Instead, the experience of the Magi is quite different (cf. Mt 2:1-12). Having come from the East, they represent all the faraway peoples of the traditional Hebrew faith. Yet they allow themselves to be guided by the star and face a long and perilous journey just to arrive at the destination and to know the truth of the Messiah. The Magi were *open* to 'novelty', and history's greatest and most surprising novelty is revealed to them: God-made-man. The Magi prostrate themselves before Jesus and offer him symbolic gifts: gold, incense and myrrh, because seeking the Lord entails not only perseverance on the journey but also generosity of heart. And lastly, they returned "to their own country" (v. 12); and the Gospel states that they returned "by another road". Brothers and sisters, each time that a man or woman encounters Jesus, he or she changes paths, returns to life in a different way, returns renewed, "by another road". They returned "to their own country", bearing within them the mystery of that humble and poor King; we can imagine that they told everyone about the experience they had had: the salvation offered by God in Christ is for *all mankind*, near and far. It is not possible to "take possession" of that Child: he is a gift for all.

Let us also have a bit of silence in our heart and allow ourselves to be illuminated by the light of Jesus that comes from Bethlehem. Let us not allow our fears to close our hearts, but let us have the courage to open ourselves to this light that is meek and delicate. Then, like the Magi, we will feel "great joy" (v. 10) that we will be unable to keep to ourselves. May the Virgin Mary — star who guides us to Jesus and Mother who shows Jesus to the Magi and to all those who approach her — support us on this journey.

After the Angelus, Pope Francis continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, for quite a few days, 49 people rescued in the Mediterranean Sea have been aboard two ngo ships, seeking a safe port to disembark. I address a heartfelt appeal to European leaders, that they demonstrate concrete solidarity to these people.

Several Oriental Churches, Catholic and Orthodox, who follow the Julian calendar, will celebrate Holy Christmas tomorrow. I extend to them my cordial and fraternal wishes as a sign of communion among all of us Christians who recognize Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Happy Christmas to all of them!

The Epiphany is also Missionary Childhood Day, which this year invites very young missionaries to be "athletes of Jesus", in order to witness to the Gospel in the family, at school and in places of recreation.

I extend my cordial greeting to all of you, individual pilgrims, families, parishes and associations, coming from Italy and from different countries. In particular I greet the faithful from Marsala, Peveragno and San Martino in Rio, the young confirmands from Bonate Sotto, and the '*Fraterna Domus*' group.

I offer a special greeting to the historic-folklorist procession that promotes the values of the Epiphany and that this year is dedicated to the territory of Abruzzo. I would also like to remember the procession of the Magi that is taking place in many cities of Poland with the widespread participation of families and associations. And I also greet the musicians from the band I heard playing. Continue to sound the joy of this day of the Epiphany.

I wish a happy Feast Day to you all. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*