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Epiphany falls on a Sunday this year; the 12th day of Christmas is not in the middle of the week when we are already back to our busy lives and so we get to celebrate *little Christmas* on a day when we are a little less busy so we can take the time to reflect on the significance of how Jesus' birth was recognized not just by the shepherds, but also by the wisemen who have travelled from afar to bring him precious gifts and to pay him homage.

The wisemen recognized something so unique in the rising of the star that would guide them to Jesus that they willingly undertook a long and perilous journey. And while they may not have been connected to the Israelite tradition, they knew that something very special was going on. For them, in their wisdom and understanding, the star represented not only a guiding light; it also represented the whole universe announcing that God had chosen to come close to the human race, so close as to become one of them... and they responded: *Arise, shine, for your light has come... nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*

If the intimacy, peace and quiet of the manger is the central theme of Christmas day, then we might say that 'light' is the central theme to today's feast. At its root, the word 'epiphany' means 'a moment of enlightenment; of sudden insight or understanding' and the Christian sense of a 'profound manifestation of the divine': God boldly announcing to all of humanity that he has arrived among us. Let us humbly ask for the grace to open ourselves to this light and to leave behind the darkness that gets in the way and that can cloud our desire to come closer to God.

For the wisemen, the light offers hope for a better world. All their study and acquired wisdom has led them to this moment and yet, so much more than that, a deep faith gives them the courage to undertake the journey. They know that what awaits them is so much greater than their worldly riches and power.

Contrast this to the other king, Herod, who sees in the star and the arrival of Jesus only opposition to his power. He falsely states that he too wants to pay homage to the child where in reality he seeks only his own glory under the guise of devotion! That is, just like all those who think that they have figured out exactly what God intends - those who have boxed God in through their own selfish desires – Herod represents cynicism and, ultimately, fear, of losing control and being reduced to the lowliness of what it means to be a humble human creature before the awesomeness of God. Why try to escape something that we can never change and that will do us good, even if it may mean going through difficult trials? There is nothing wrong with being a lowly human being, especially when we allow God to brighten our lives.

Another important theme of this celebration is that of inclusivity; it is now clear that the invitation to come to know God is not reserved for a select group but rather is open to all who are willing to respond to the invitation to take the journey to follow the light and to see where it will lead. All are welcome!



Today, following the lead of the Magis, we are called to embrace a truly 'globalized' faith because, rather than focusing on all the differences we possess, we know that we have a common calling to be open to *epiphany* – the unexpectedness of God and, guided by the star, we need, like them, to be attentive to the signs that are sent to us in today's world and in the lives of all of us to focus on what we share in common more than what sets us apart. Let us follow the lead of the Wisemen in following the "star of wonder, star of night, star of radiant beauty bright; westward leading still proceeding, guide us to the perfect light."