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Solemnity of the Epiphany

As we celebrate the Epiphany, we remember that the magi were led by the light of the star. That is *how* the magi were led, and *where* they were led, but *whom* were they looking for? They were looking for the Newborn King of the Jews. *Why* were they looking for the Newborn King of the Jews? The Gospel tells us: to pay Him homage. Why were they going to pay Him homage? *What* were they expecting once they found Him? Those are not easy questions to answer.

There's no way to know what may have been going on in the hearts and minds of the magi. Being that they were from the East, it is likely that they had different expectations than the Jewish people. There may have been surprises waiting for them whenever they finally did find the Lord Jesus. Again, we don't know exactly what they were expecting, but the point is that they were searching for the Newborn King.

They did not say what they wanted from the Newborn King. They did not say that they were expecting something from Him. Instead, they brought gifts for Him. They were not searching for something and that the Lord Jesus was a sort of means to that end. No, they only sought the Lord Jesus Himself.

Why were they going to pay Him homage? Perhaps they were looking for someone who had answers to their deepest questions. They were, after all, magi, those who were charged with obtaining wisdom and seeking answers in mysticism in the East. Again, the Lord Jesus may not have met the expectations of those in the East, but that does not mean that the magi found nothing. They wanted to pay homage to the Lord, which is what they did.

As we come to Mass, perhaps we can ask ourselves what it is that we are searching. What are we looking for as we come to Mass? We know when and where Mass is taking place, and hopefully we can understand how to get here. But that does not answer the question of why we come to Mass and what we expect once we get here. We might not be following a star as it rises, as the magi did, but the Holy Spirit brings us here.

Perhaps whenever we come to Mass, we come with an expectation of what we will receive from it. Now, granted, there are many benefits that we receive whenever we come to Mass. We receive God's grace and if we are in the state of grace, we are granted all the benefits of receiving Communion. Most importantly, we receive the Lord Jesus Himself. We

receive the Lord's words in the readings and especially in the Gospel. We also receive the Lord Jesus Himself in the Blessed Sacrament.

That is what the magi were looking for: the Lord Jesus and His presence were not just a stop on their way to something else; they were looking for the Newborn King. So, the magi found the Lord Jesus, and they found what they were looking for. What about answers to the deepest questions of their hearts? Well, the tiny Infant could not speak, but nevertheless His mere presence was perhaps something that fulfilled their hearts. His was a presence which brought eternity into this world, a presence that surpassed rational thought.

Maybe it was not that they came to have their questions answered. Maybe the initial questions were the impetus for them to go, but once they experienced the transcendent presence of the Lord in the manger, their deep questions led to even deeper questions: is God with us? Does He care? Does He love us? They may not have been conscious of those questions, but once they were in the presence of the Lord, then they found the answers to questions that were deeper than they knew. Maybe they were searching for eternity.

Is that what we approach whenever we are here at Mass? Do we experience that we are in the presence of the Lord, that we are experiencing something beyond this world? Are our hearts fulfilled when we are in the Lord's presence? Perhaps we leave Mass feeling empty or simply distracted for a while, but then empty later. Our hearts are not elevated. Yet that is not what should happen: like the magi, our hearts can find fulfillment in the still presence of the Lord in the manger. Our hearts, though, have to be open to this transcendence. If we come with our spiritual eyes closed, we will not see the Lord's presence.

However, Mass is more than just what we get from it. Mass is also about what we bring. The magi brought gold, frankincense and myrrh. We bring our monetary offerings, yes, but it is important to note that Mass is more about our duty to worship God than about what we get out of it. Mass is about thanking God for what He has given us. Mass is about offering our own hearts to the Lord.

As we approach the altar, we must ask ourselves what we are looking for. What are the questions that you have deep in your heart? Only you can know what those questions are, by prayer and reflection. No matter what the questions may be, we know where we will find the answers: in the Lord Jesus Christ. In His transcendent presence, we can find the answers to questions that reside in the deepest parts of our hearts, that we did not know were there.