



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

The Epiphany of the Lord-January 6th2024

***Readings: Isaiah 60: 1-6, Psalm 71, Ephesians 3: 2-3. 5-6,
Matthew 2: 1-12***

The journey of the Magi is wreathed in romance and wonder. Out of a dark night sky these men come, long prepared and long travelled, to the court of the newborn king. It turns out not to be a palace but a stable. The cradle not a golden basket but a manger full of hay. The mother, not of the currently ruling dynasty, but of a once and future king whose achievements remain legendary and whose bloodline is given the eternal kingship of God's people.

The unexpected end to their astronomically inspired pilgrimage in no way diminishes their fulfilment or their desire to prostrate themselves before the child in the arms of Mary. They have, after all, come, not to the future ruler of some tin pot Roman colony like Judaea, but to the One who is to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Their journeying, Gentiles to the court of the King of the Jews, as the Cross would later declare, moves us deeply and inexplicably because, truth to tell, it prefigures our own. A few of us are shepherds, instant blinding revelation, fear, joy, the rush to Jesus and the subsequent loud street witness. Most of us are Magi. Long prepared, researched, thought

through, planned – a long time coming to the final act of obeisance at the end of the long dark sky of the star-led trek of faith.

But our hearts must be no different to those of the shepherds and, indeed, the total and unreserved witness and homage to Christ the King.

If that is our calling to be Magi, then we also need to reflect regularly, at this season of Epiphany, on the gifts we bring to the Lord, the Christ Child. In this we are also to mirror the Magi. We are to bring the same gifts for those gifts represent us as surely as they represent those long ago and purposeful wanderers who were prepared, like Abram, to become Gypsies for God.

As we prepare to set out for Bethlehem the Magi ask us to consider the gift of Gold. It denotes Kingship and, if the Christ child is to be the Lord of our life then two things need to happen. We need to acknowledge that everything comes from Him – as St Augustine reminds us, ‘What do you have that you were not given?’ And that we own nothing. We are temporary stewards of this material world and of the mysteries of God. Thus all we have is to be at His disposal. This assessment of our material wealth is vital because, where our treasure is, Jesus tells us, there will our heart be also. So our stewarding of our temporary wealth is both formative and indicative of our heart. In Scripture the norm was to set aside ten per cent (a tithe) for the Caritas, the charitable work of the Community of Faith, The Church. Those I know who follow this practice have found this to work and have never been the poorer for it. Indeed most would say that God has richly blessed them as a result. Whatever we decide the proper use and disposal of our earthly ‘treasure’ is one of the gifts that all wise men and women lay at the foot of Jesus.

The second gift is Frankincense. If we are short of servers on a Bodmin Sunday morning, I always insist that the priority is the Incense. Why? Aesthetics? That sort of chap? No. Crucifix hangs over the altar and hugely visible. The lights, the candles are on the altar. The centrality of

the Cross is not in doubt and the Light of the World is in place with its reminder to us to be bearers of that Light into the world. The Incense does several things. It reminds us that, in the words of the Epiphany hymn, God is near and indeed Present. 'Incense owns a deity nigh.' It reminds us of what the New Testament calls the 'sweet smelling savour of Christ'. It also recalls the Book of the Revelation's reference to the 'prayers of the saints ascending like incense'. We do not pray alone but in the presence of the whole company of Heaven.

Epiphany, then, is a great time to review our worship, our personal devotion, our pattern, how we give glory to God both in private and public worship and in our witness to the world. How do we 'own a deity nigh'?, witnessing to the Presence of the Lord?

Finally.....myrrh. We are used to seeing this as a prophesy of the significance of the death of Jesus. And it is. But it is also a call to review our own dying. We are to offer up our own death with His. This means reviewing our own mortality. How will we approach the end of this mortal life and prepare for the transition to the life to come. Are our practical affairs in order? Are the instructions for our Requiem Funeral in place? But above that and more....are our hearts settled and at peace, we who have so often been torn apart by the dying of those we love. Are we resolved and ready, come what may, come when it may, to offer our dying to Jesus? To live for Him and die with Him with the same grace and forgiveness and assurance that brings the Magi thus far and sends them home different men, all offered, the future vouched safe to them. These are our tasks for this Epiphany – hearts excited, gifts borne, all offered, free to serve and with the glorious knowledge that we have seen God and He will we make the journey home by a different way. Our wealth transmuted by the philosopher's stone of Love. Our Worship enriched by the certain knowledge of the Presence and the renewed awareness of the whole company of Heaven

And the fear of dying banished by the preparation of our souls, the
fulsome living out of the Faith and our longing to be forever in the
company of Our Lady and St Joseph, the Magi and the Shepherds, the
Apostles, Saints and Martyrs in the eternal court of the Newborn King