



## **FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD ARCHBISHOP'S CALL TO SHARE HOMILY | JANUARY 7, 2024**

### **I Feast of Epiphany**

I always have mixed feelings when we arrive at the Feast of the Epiphany. It marks the end of the Christmas Season. Many people will be taking down Christmas trees and other decorations today.

However, in many European countries, the celebration of the Epiphany is more significant than Christmas. With the arrival of the Magi, it is clear that Jesus did not come exclusively for the Jewish people, but for every nation and people. These mysterious figures of the East represent the Gentiles, all the non-Jewish people of the world.

The Magi are often referred to as the Wise Men. This is an appropriate title because they were able to recognize what so many Jews and Gentiles did not. They were men both of science and faith. When the Magi recognized unusual celestial phenomenon, they understood that something extraordinary was happening. They followed the star that led them to an animal shelter where a child was resting in a manger.

The Magi made an arduous journey, not to receive any monetary reward, but to worship God who had entered fully into our human condition by becoming a baby. The Magi came not expecting to receive gifts, but to present gifts. The Magi came to adore, worship and give. They also were a great source of encouragement to Mary and Joseph.

The Magi were given a beautiful spiritual gift – the ability to recognize that God had immersed Himself in our humanity by humbling Himself to become a helpless infant. The material gifts that they brought to the humble cave in Bethlehem revealed their acknowledgment that the child in the manger was fully human while also divine. They recognized the newborn baby, despite his birth taking place in a humble stable of Bethlehem, to be a King who was not only Lord of their lives but the Creator of the Cosmos – Lord of lords and King of kings.

### **II The Miracle of the Incarnation Changes Everything**

The Church gives us the Christmas Season each year to renew and deepen our wonder for the miracle of the Incarnation. The Creator God, the Lord of lords, pursued us by entering fully into our frail human condition. God humbled Himself, entering into our humanity so that we could share in His divinity.

That the Word became flesh, changes everything. It gives us both a new dignity and destiny. Through the waters of Baptism, we received the very life of Jesus and became living temples of God. Through our reception of the Eucharist today, this divine life within us will be renewed and strengthened. The birth of Jesus also has bestowed upon us a destiny to live with God and the Saints forever.

### **III To Greater Things than Jesus**

We have also been given a mission. Jesus told His Disciples: "... whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these ..." [John 14:12] Ponder this amazing promise of Jesus. We are destined to do greater works than Our Lord! How is that possible?

Jesus gave the Apostles an impossible mission – to make disciples of all nations. During His earthly ministry, Jesus spoke to thousands. He had given special attention to the formation of His Twelve Apostles and prepared a group of 70 other disciples to go on mission, proclaiming the Kingdom of God is at hand. Our Lord probably made several hundred disciples during His earthly ministry. Jesus exercised His ministry in a very small geographic area.



By every human calculation, the Apostles were completely unqualified to lead a movement with a mission to transform the world. They were not considered the best and the brightest. The Twelve had no money, held no public positions of influence, owned no churches or schools. They were equipped with no books, no programs, no videos and no slick power point presentations. The modern means of transportation – planes, trains or automobiles – were not available to them. They did not have the printing press, much less social media or the internet to disseminate information. All they had was their witness of how Jesus had touched their hearts and changed their lives.

Incredibly, those first disciples were able to proclaim the Gospel in one direction as far as India and in the other direction to Spain. Within less than 300 years, they transformed the European and North African cultures from being dominated by pagan cults to Christianity.

## **IV That All May Be One**

One of the highlights of the past year for me was participating in World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal. 1.5 million young adults from more than 170 countries participated in the closing Mass. I wish each of you could have witnessed the enthusiasm and joy of these young Catholics who came from every corner of the world. Today, there are more than 1 billion Catholics who dwell on every continent.

In John's Gospel, Jesus prayed for the infant Church: "... that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me." [John 17:20-21] The unity of the Church was essential at its beginning and remains so today. It is the unity of the Church across national and ethnic boundaries that compels the world to take notice of Jesus and open their hearts to the Gospel.

## **V Call to Share**

Our annual Archbishop's Call to Share Campaign is one tangible way that we demonstrate the unity for which Jesus prayed for His disciples. Each year at this time, I invite you to join me in pooling our resources by making a sacrificial donation to support the Church's pastoral, evangelical, educational and charitable ministries.

Each year, Call to Share is an expression of our unity as Catholics. It is a Catholic moment where, in a very visible way, we show the power of our unity in our love for Jesus and His Church. Together, through Call to Share, we address the spiritual, pastoral, educational and material needs of our archdiocesan family in ways that we could not do as individuals or as individual parishes.

Your donation to Call to Share supports the formation of our future priests, deacons and Catholic school teachers! Call to Share helps Catholic Charities not only address the immediate needs of the poor but also lift many individuals and families out of the cycle of poverty. Call to Share helps the Church prepare couples for marriage while, at the same time, strengthening marriage and family life. Call to Share helps keep our Catholic Schools financially accessible to every child and family. Call to Share allows us to protect with love mothers and children from the tragedy of abortion. Call to Share makes it possible for Villa St. Francis to care for the elderly as well as for Catholic Hospice to surround with love and spiritual support those approaching death. These are just a few examples of the difference your Call to Share donation makes in the lives of so many.

As you gaze upon the Magi in the Nativity scene bringing their gifts to honor the newborn Jesus, ask the Holy Spirit to guide your decision in making a sacrificial gift to Call to Share. United, our gifts are making a difference in tens of thousands of lives while honoring Jesus in the manner that is most pleasing to Him – loving one another as Our Lord has loved and blessed us.