



The Holy See

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

*Saint Peter's Square
Saturday, 6 January 2018*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Happy feast day!

Today, the Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord, the Gospel (cf. *Mt 2:1-12*) presents us with three attitudes with which Christ Jesus' coming and his manifestation to the world were welcomed. The first attitude: *searching, diligent searching*; the second: *indifference*; the third: *fear*.

Diligent searching: The Magi do not hesitate to set out on a journey to seek the Messiah. Arriving in Jerusalem, they ask: "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him" (v. 2). They made a long journey and now with great care, they attempt to locate where the newborn King can be found. In Jerusalem, they turn to King Herod, who asks the high priests and the scribes to discover the place where the Messiah was to be born.

This diligent searching of the Magi contrasts with the second attitude: the *indifference* of the high priests and the scribes. These people are very complacent. They know the Scriptures and are able to give the correct answer on the birthplace: "in Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet" (v. 5); they know, but they do not go out of their way to visit the Messiah. And Bethlehem is a few kilometres away, but they don't budge.

Even more negative is the third attitude, that of Herod: fear. He *is afraid* that that Child will take away his power. He summons the Magi and has them tell him when the star appeared to them and

he sends them to Bethlehem saying: “Go and search diligently for the child and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him” (v. 8). In reality, Herod does not want to go to worship Jesus; Herod wants to know where the child is — not to adore Him — but to eliminate Him, because he considers Him a rival. And listen carefully: fear always leads to hypocrisy. Hypocrites are like this because their hearts are filled with fear.

These are the three attitudes that we find in the Gospel: *the diligent searching of the Magi; the indifference of the high priests and the scribes, of those familiar with theology; and the fear of Herod*. And we too can think and choose which of the three to assume. Do I wish to diligently search for Jesus? “But Jesus means nothing to me... I have peace of mind...”. Or, do I fear Jesus and want to eliminate him from my heart?

Selfishness can lead us to consider Jesus’ coming into our life as a threat. Thus we try to suppress or to silence Jesus’ message. When we follow human ambitions, the most comfortable prospects, tendencies toward evil, Jesus is perceived as an obstacle.

On the other hand, the temptation of indifference is also always present. Even though we know that Jesus is the Saviour — ours, of us all — we prefer to live as if he were not: instead of behaving in coherence with our own Christian faith, we follow worldly principles that entice us to satisfy tendencies toward arrogance, toward thirsting for power, toward riches.

We are instead called to follow the example of the Magi: to be *diligent in searching*, prepared to go out of our way to encounter Jesus in our lives. Seeking him in order to adore him, to acknowledge that he is our Lord, the One who reveals the true path to be followed. If we have this attitude, Jesus truly saves us, and we can live a fine life; we can grow in faith, in hope, in charity toward God and toward our brothers and sisters.

Let us invoke the intercession of Mary Most Holy, star of pilgrim humankind throughout time. With her maternal help, may every person come to Christ, Light of Truth, and may the world advance along the path of justice and peace.

After the Angelus:

Dear brothers and sisters, several Catholic and Orthodox *Oriental Churches* are currently celebrating the *Lord’s Birth*. I offer them my most cordial wishes: may this joyous celebration be the source of new spiritual vigour and communion among all of us Christians who recognize him as Lord and Saviour. In a special way, I would like to express my closeness to Coptic Orthodox Christians, and to cordially greet my brother Tawadros ii on the joyous occasion of the consecration of the new Cathedral in Cairo.

The Epiphany is also the *World Day of Missionary Childhood*, which this year invites young missionaries to assume Jesus' gaze so that he becomes the precious guide of their commitment to prayer, fraternity and sharing with the most needy of their peers.

I extend my cordial greeting to all of you, individual pilgrims, families, parish groups and associations from Italy and different countries. In particular, I greet the faithful of Lavello and those from San Martino in Rio, the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Apparition, and the confirmands from Bonate Sotto and Romano di Lombardia.

A special greeting goes to the historical folkloric procession that promotes the values of the Epiphany and that this year is dedicated to the territory of the *Monti Prenestini*. I would also like to mention the procession of the Magi taking place in many cities in Poland with broad participation of families and associations.

I wish everyone a happy feast day. Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch.
Arrivederci!