

## 210103 Homily in Epiphany

Toon Suffys SJ

The first lecture sketches a beautiful scene: Jerusalem, situated on top of the mountain, shines of God's presence. The light in Jerusalem illuminates the whole region and people come to the light, from near and far.

But the second reading nuances: it is not only in Jerusalem that there is light, the pagans also participate in the light of God, they are co-heirs of God's light.

And the gospel acknowledges that pagans also seek God, and the story of the Three Sages shows that all people who sincerely seek can find God.

But the story also contains a warning for us. The Jews knew that the Messiah would come from their people and they were comfortable with it. They would undoubtedly share in the gifts of the Messiah. In the meantime they could lead their own lives: Herod carefully guarded his position of power - high priests and scribes stood by him. They were not seeking the light of God. That light would come into Jerusalem and they were in Jerusalem. Why search?

Strangely enough, however, the magicians no longer see the light in Jerusalem. The star, the light they came for, has disappeared. High priests and scribes are not interested in a light in Bethlehem. They do not go there. The light will come to them to shine in Jerusalem. And indeed, the cross of Jesus will be in Jerusalem.

It is only when the wise men leave Jerusalem and take up their own quest again that they will see the light again. They find the Child and honour it. They have not seen the mature Messiah, but they have experienced his message.

What about us? Do we keep looking for the light of our God in our lives? Or are we at peace: we Christians have the light in us, we do not have to search anymore. Should we not, like the shepherds and the wise men, look for the manger in which Mary has laid her son?

We too have moments of darkness and unbelief. In this pandemic, for example, many Christians are asking themselves: where is our God now? We can only experience our liturgy to a limited extent. And we fear that this will reduce our faith.

But, is this pandemic not an invitation, in the darkness of our time, to look again, in the questions and fears we are experiencing, for that Child who speaks to us of a loving God? Every difficult or dark period is an invitation to become active again with the Shepherds and the Wise Men in search of Jesus.

In that search we must take the word of Jesus with us: what you have done for one of the least of my sisters and brothers, you have done for me.

So our search for Jesus will have to do with how we can serve those who are suffering in our world, those who are in darkness? Can we bring a little light of Christ to those who do not share in the benefits of our society?

Then we will see the many initiatives (large and small) that are emerging everywhere to alleviate the suffering of our time. We can help those small attempts to live lovingly in this new time, to grow and to blossom. Then we can let the light of Christ shine on those who are struggling.

Already today, with the three wise men, we can offer our own little gifts to the child in the manger: attention in our neighbourhood to people who are suffering.