



I was listening to Catholic radio recently, and they had a scripture scholar on there that had studied the whole Epiphany story. He brought out some interesting facts.

He reminded us that we actually don't know how many wise men there were. Oh, we sing "We three kings of Orient are" and we assume that there were three because there were three gifts. But the scriptures do not say how many. Could have been two, could have been four. Well, no matter really.

We do know that they were scholars, that they studied the stars. We know that they came from the East, that is, from east of Israel, probably from Persia which is modern-day Iran. Also, we know that, at that time, it was widely known that the Jews were waiting for a Messiah and also widely believed that a star would be connected to the birth of a significant world leader.

The wise men put two and two together. A great star had arisen in the western sky, which they studied. The Jews were to the west (who were waiting for a Messiah). A great star, they believed, meant the birth of a great person. Could it be, they were asking themselves, that this star signifies the birth of the Messiah from the Jews?

You see, God used all these things to draw these wise men to Jesus. Jesus came, not just for Jews, but for the salvation of all and these wise men were to be, in God's plan, the first Gentiles, non-Jews, to receive the Lord.

"Could this be the Messiah?" they were asking themselves. "Let's find out. Let us go."

I want to point out to you that this wouldn't have been like taking a little trip to Indianapolis or something. From where they were it would have been over a 600 mile journey, on camel back! We're probably talking about a couple months journey, at least.

But they were drawn, pulled, willing to make this arduous journey. But they were going not simply to answer a question, "Could this be the Messiah?" What then was the purpose of their trip? Why would they take upon themselves this arduous journey? The scriptures tell us. The wise men tell Herod, "We have come to do Him homage." This word, "homage," in the scriptures means much more than simply to give honor to. It means "worship," "adoration." "We have come to adore Him. We have come to worship Him." Their hearts recognize Him as God.

So what does this "adoration" mean that the wise men give Him?

Well, think about things that you adore:

1. A newborn baby, maybe. You know many times we see this little guy, this little girl, and we adore them, their simplicity, their innocent beauty, their helplessness.
2. Or when you first fall in love, you adore that other person. Who they are, how they say things in a certain way, how they look, how they understand you like no one else does. There is a certain kind of adoration going on there.

It makes us happy to adore that little baby or that other person. It fills us with joy. These examples give us but a glimpse of the adoration that God is calling us to give Him. The adoration which we give to created things, and many times not wrongly (it's OK to adore that little baby), but this adoration is passing. It fades over time. But the adoration that God calls us to does not pass, does not fade, and it is on a whole different level. It rises to the level of worship because He is God.

But we can use our understanding of how we adore created things to help us to see better the adoration that we should give to God.

He is beauty itself.

He is infinite and merciful love.

He is our creator and savior.

He is Lord and master of everything that exists.

We adore Him because He is God and this doesn't fade like the adoration of earthly things does.

In fact, the more we adore and worship Him, the more deeply we are able to adore and worship Him and the more fully He shows Himself to us. This fills us with great joy because we were made to see Him and to be filled with awe and wonder at Him and to worship and adore Him.

It is why we come here to Mass every Sunday, even every day, to worship Him, to adore Him. It is why we take time to pray, good amounts of time to pray, to let our adoration and worship of Him deepen within us. It is what pulled those wise men across that desert, to see Him, to worship Him, to adore Him.

My friends, the joy of joys is that the worship and adoration that we give to God here on earth is but a glimpse of the worship and adoration of God that we will give to Him eternally in heaven. God will so fill us with Himself there that we will want for nothing eternally. And so even now we begin - worshipping Him, adoring the one who made our hearts to adore Him.

With the wise men "O come let us adore Him" all the days of our life and for all eternity.

**Fr. Mark Gurtner at St. Anthony de Padua Church, South Bend, Indiana
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