



Epiphany of the Lord 2006

Isaiah 60:1-6 Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

When I was a child one of my favourite stories of the Christmas period was the Coming of the Magi. The statues, when they arrived at the crib, were large and quite exotic. There was something mysterious, too, about the way they spent such a short time at the crib before disappearing for another year.

The second chapter of Matthew is filled with movement. It starts in Bethlehem and ends in Nazareth by way of Egypt. These stories are unique to Matthew, who focuses on the fulfilment of Scripture. The writer draws parallels with the story of Moses.

At the beginning of the book of Exodus we read about the birth and boyhood of Moses. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, orders the killing of male infants. Moses is saved through the intervention of wise women. In fear for his life Moses runs to the desert. Later, when the threat is over, the Lord bids him return to save his people.

Matthew tells us that from his birth Jesus bears the likeness of the ancient saving figure. Jesus will exceed the work of his ancestor and bring about liberation in a new and unique manner.

The evangelist ends his Gospel with the great commission. "Go make disciples of all the Gentiles, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days until the end of the age."

We can now see the magi in the context of the words of Isaiah Chapter 60. The whole chapter is a glorious song of freedom and renewal.

The glory of the new creation is for all, without distinction. Here are some images for our reflection.

"You shall be radiant at what you see,
your heart shall throb and overflow."

To become aware of God working in the world is like love at first sight. To become aware of God's presence is like looking into a sunrise.

"The riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you."

For most of us it is difficult to appreciate the wealth of life in a rock pool. The sea is a mysterious storehouse of unimaginable delights.

"All the vessels of the sea are assembled...to bring your children home with their silver and gold."

This great reunion of all the family of God is marked by gift giving. The silver and gold of discipleship is Christ who touches the world through us.

“No longer shall your sun go down, or your moon withdraw, for the Lord will be your light forever.”

Christ, Light of the World, fulfilled his commission in the incarnation through service and fidelity to God to his death. To put on Christ is to wear the saving prophetic mantle of Christ.

Epiphany, or the showing forth of the presence of God in Jesus, is not the commemoration of a past event but an ever new call to continue the showing forth in our time, in our place, among our people.

Paul in Ephesians 3 continues the Epiphany message.

“Through the gift, God in his goodness bestowed on me by the exercise of his power, I became a minister of the Gospel. To me, the least of all believers was given the grace to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.”

And so in us the showing forth continues.

Patricia Stevenson rsj.