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A God for all peoples

Patricia Datchuck Sánchez | Jan. 8, 2012

Through the centuries, a variety of interesting legends have grown up around this feast of the Epiphany. Although the Magi from the east are not named, described or numbered in the scriptures, most legends agree that there were three of them. One particular legend, told to world explorer Marco Polo on a trip to Persia (Iran), described Balthazar as a young man, Caspar as middle-aged and Melchior as a senior citizen (*The Travels of Marco Polo, or, the Description of the World*, 1298).

Based on this legend, we can imagine the three travelers arriving in Bethlehem, each going separately into the cave to visit the holy family. When Melchior, the eldest, enters, he sees no one but an old man like himself, with whom he is quite at ease. They speak together, sharing memories. When the middle-aged Balthazar enters, he meets a middle-aged teacher with whom he talks passionately of leadership and responsibility. Finally, young Caspar enters and he meets a young prophet with whom he shares his thoughts on reform and promise.
After each visits separately, the Magi take their gifts and go back to the cave together. When they enter, they see no one but a 13-day-old infant.

The Epiphany of the Lord

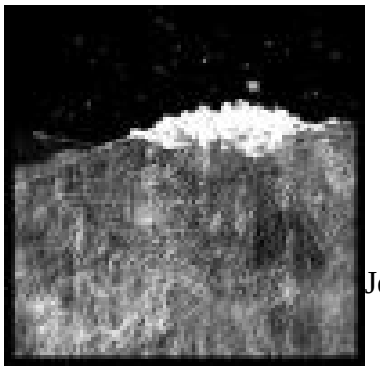
Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalm 72

Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12

Full text of the readings [1]



Jesus understands and speaks to every human being at every stage of life. Those with the maturity of old age hear the call to integrity and wisdom. The middle-aged hear the call to responsibility and service. The young hear the call to find their way toward intimacy with God and to find the unique identity that will shape and direct their lives.

And you? Who do you meet as you come bearing the gift of yourself to offer to God this day? To what is God calling you? How will you use the gift of the new year that lies ahead? Like the Magi of old, we too are on a continuing journey, searching at every juncture along the way for some manifestation of God and of grace.

In their individual and collective travels, the ancient Israelites (first reading, Trito-Isaiah) gradually learned that God had chosen them to reflect light and truth in the world. They also came to understand that they were privileged to be part of God?s universal plan of salvation. This required them to include, rather than discount, the value of others. Since we have inherited the same privileges and responsibilities as our ancestors in the faith, we, like them, are challenged to be kind and welcoming to everyone, even those who might seem to have little value in society?s eyes. During his public ministry, Jesus would repeatedly affirm the all-inclusive love of God by seeking out those whom the righteous had deemed unworthy or useless. Trito-Isaiah?s vision of a cavalcade

of nations coming home to God began to be realized in Jesus. The continued realization of this universal vision is up to those who know the privilege of believing in God and in Jesus.

This privilege is celebrated by the author of today?s second reading, who assures the Ephesians (and us) that it has been God?s plan all along to embrace all humankind with the gift of salvation. We might think, ?Surely tyrants and despots are excluded? or ?Surely there?s no place for atheists or agnostics? or ?Surely God did not intend for the chosen ones to rub shoulders with the disreputable and the depraved.? But despite our provincial attitudes and our ever-narrowing ideas of who belongs to the people of God, this feast enunciates without equivocation that God wants all to be included in the loving and gracious embrace of salvation.

What will we talk about when we enter the ?cave? of our hearts to encounter there the God of Epiphany? Will our conversation actually be a monologue? Or might God be able to get in a few words edgewise?

[Patricia Sánchez holds a master?s degree in literature and religion of the Bible from a joint degree program at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary in New York.]

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