

*“Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.”* Today is the feast of the Epiphany, the celebration of the coming of the magi, the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. It is also the end to the traditional twelve days of Christmas. In our first reading we hear from the prophet Isaiah about how the glory of the Lord made Jerusalem a shining beacon to all the world, revealing God’s glory to all nations. As Christians we know that this light that illuminates the darkness of the world is the light of Christ. The light that brings the fullness of the knowledge of God to the world and we know that the radiance that pours out on all peoples is the infinite mercy and love of Christ, seeking out his lost sheep, binding up the wounds of sin and healing the crippling effects of disbelief. In our second reading, St. Paul tells us that the manifestation of Christ to both the shepherds and the magi is, in actuality, the revelation of God’s loving design for the salvation of mankind, made manifest in the fullness of time, and that this is the mystery of Christ who is to be the convergence of the Jews and the Gentiles in one Holy Church, one body of Christ.

In the twenty centuries that have passed since the mystery of Christ was first revealed to the ancient shepherds and magi, we find ourselves still struggling forward, still journeying towards Christ, not yet having arrived at the fullness of faith and the fullness of our salvation. In his papal encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II said that, “The mission of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to the Church, is still very far from completion. ... an overall view of the human race shows that this mission is still only beginning and that we must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to its service.” It was this same understanding of the Church’s mission to make Christ known to the world that underlay and defined the Church’s dogmatic constitution, *Lumen Gentium*. The whole of Vatican II was deeply stirred and motivated by the profoundly held conviction that the whole

reason for the Church's existence is to proclaim Christ to all peoples in the world and that this work is still far from complete.

Today, at the beginning of the third millennium, there are great forces at work in the world seeking a new globalization, forces working to bring the economic and political resources of the world into one harmonious new world order based on science and reason, social awareness and political cooperation. As laudable as such goals may be, the history of humanity shows unequivocally that without a firm spiritual grounding in Christ, such efforts are doomed to failure, and not just failure but catastrophic failure as the great wars of the last century have so clearly demonstrated. Reflecting upon Pope Benedict XVI's view of the Church in the world, I suggest to you that the magi of scripture are prefigurements of the three great dimensions of the human history, the political, the social and the religious, and that they represent the need for the enlightenment of divine revelation that must illuminate the minds and hearts and souls of all men if true peace is ever to prevail in the world of men. It is God alone who is the true father of all men and it is Christ, God's eternal Word, who came into the world to make God known to all men and to teach us that we are all brothers, sons of one Father. God alone is the artisan of peace and solidarity among men and it is he alone who guides the course of human history to its ultimate conclusion.

When the magi came, they prostrated themselves before the Christ child, and until mankind learns to prostrate itself before Christ, man will forever remain in darkness. Christ alone is the pure, true light that illuminates the human soul, and Christ's light cannot darken but only reveal what lies hidden there. The example of the magi should be an example for all the faithful, calling us to bow down in humble contemplation of the glory of God made manifest in Christ. May Mary, who received those first magi also receive us who seek the light of Christ and may she reveal to us the depths of his love and mercy and forgiveness, now and forever.