

Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord (A)

Venite Adoremus!

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-2,7-8,10-11,12-13; Ephesians 3:2-3a,5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

If you enter our church through the front door, you will notice a Latin phrase inscribed above the entrance, "Venite Adoremus!" It means "Come, let us adore." It echoes the invitation of the responsorial psalm, "Lord, every nation on earth will adore you." It is our response to the Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord Jesus. God shows Himself in Jesus as the Savior of the world. He wills to reveal Himself and be encountered by us.

We hear again the story of the Magi's journey from the East, inspiring us to trust that faith can guide us through life's unknowns and challenges. They left their homes and journeyed into the unknown. When they reached Judea, they met Herod, who gave them information not out of belief but out of malicious intent. Guided by a star, the wise men reached Bethlehem, not a palace but a humble animal shelter. There, they found the child in a manger. They worshipped him and gave gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These gifts reveal the roles of our Lord Jesus in our lives: king, priest, and prophet. Their story ends with these words: "Having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way" (Matt. 2:12). This means that after their encounter with Jesus, their lives were changed forever.

Their story ends, and ours begins and continues. We are like the Magi, coming to worship Jesus. When we reflect on their journey, we find lessons that speak to our lives. Just as their encounter with the child Jesus changed their lives, we hope our encounter this Christmas has made a difference and deepened our faith. It is important to ask ourselves, "Did my Christmas make a difference in my faith in Jesus?"

The star guiding the Magi symbolizes faith, reminding us that without it, we too can be lost. Faith helps us encounter God in our lives.

The Magi encountered the Savior in Bethlehem, lying in a manger. The manger is a powerful yet often overlooked symbol of Christmas. A manger is not a crib but a feeding trough for animals, a narrow container for food. The word "manger" derives from the Latin "mangiare," meaning to eat. In this way, the word 'manger' quietly invites us: mangiare – to eat, mangantayon, kain po, kaon na, comer!

By being placed in a manger, God shows us that Jesus came to be our food. It was no accident that He was born in Bethlehem. God planned it. Bethlehem means House of Bread. The Bread of Life was born in the House of Bread and placed in a manger, a feeding trough. From the first night of our Lord Jesus on earth, the Sacred Scripture quietly and intentionally points toward the Holy Eucharist. The manger and the altar are closely connected. In the manger, Jesus humbly places Himself in our human condition, while at the altar He offers His body as our food, made possible through His passion, death, and resurrection. Later, Jesus says, "I am the bread of life. Whoever eats this bread will live forever" (John 6:35). What He says with words, He already shows at His birth. What He teaches, He reveals from the beginning by God's choice.

God chose to feed our deepest human hunger. He did not come into the world in a place of power but in a place where hunger is met. Poor people know what hunger feels like. By choosing the manger, God ensures that the poor are not only recipients of His love but also teachers of profound truths about longing and desire. The poor understand what it means to hunger for bread, meaning, mercy, healing, forgiveness, and wholeness.

On Christmas, God in a manger shows what the Holy Eucharist later proclaims: God feeds His people with Himself. From the start, Jesus is given to us as food so that we may live. Our deepest hunger is not for power, wealth, or popularity but for love, mercy, forgiveness, and friendship with God. God not only opens Himself to our hungers but also offers Himself to satisfy them. Only the food from heaven can truly satisfy us.

Our patron, St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, reminds us: "Do you realize that Jesus is there in the tabernacle expressly for you, for you alone? He burns with the desire to come into your heart; don't listen to the demon, laugh at him, and go without fear to receive the Jesus of peace and love."

The devil is clever at making people think it's fine not to receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. He often offers pleasures and comforts that may satisfy for a while but later leave a nagging emptiness.

St. Therese encourages us: "Receive Communion often, very often; there you have the sole remedy if you want to be cured. Jesus has not put this attraction in your heart for nothing."

We are like the Magi, coming to adore Jesus. But unlike the Magi, we not only worship the Lord but also receive Him in the Holy Eucharist as our heavenly food. Our Communion with the Lord connects us to heaven. We become what we receive. Fed by Jesus himself, we become food that nourishes other lives. With Jesus, our lives can also be a light for those in darkness.

There was a devoted mother who was deeply worried when she learned her only son was addicted to drugs. Every day, she attended Holy Mass and prayed for one thing: that her son would stop. It was a hard time. Her son stopped listening to her and stopped going to church. He was always out and even began selling their belongings to support his addiction.

One night, the son came home and saw his mother kneeling at their home altar. Her hands were folded, and she was crying as she prayed. That moment touched him deeply. It was an epiphany—a light shining in the darkness. His mother's love became the food that fed his real hunger. The next day, he told his mother, "Mom, don't worry anymore. I will stop using drugs." This time, she cried tears of joy, not tears of pain.

For a week, her son changed. He stayed home, stopped going out at night, and even went to the Sacrament of Reconciliation with her. But one night, two armed young men came to their house and shot him. The mother held him as he bled. Before he died, he looked at her and said, "Mom, thank you for never giving up on me."

The mother found her son before he was taken away from her. He was found because he responded to the light offered to him through his mother.

God never stops manifesting His mercy, love, and friendship to us.

Indeed, He is with us at the altar of the Holy Eucharist.

We are like the Magi, continuing their story.

Like the Magi, let us refrain from listening to the noise of the world.

Let us always choose God wisely.

Let us choose to come to adore Him and to live only for Him.

Venite Adoremus!

Fr. Manny Hewe
Pastor