

Epiphany of the Lord 2008 – January 6

LESSON: God's Kingdom, the Church, Extends Throughout All Time and Space

What Child is This? It's a very **familiar** Christmas song (one we will sing during the Communion Procession today). **What child is this?** It's a song that asks a very simple question, but that has a very **profound** answer. And the answer today is given to us through the



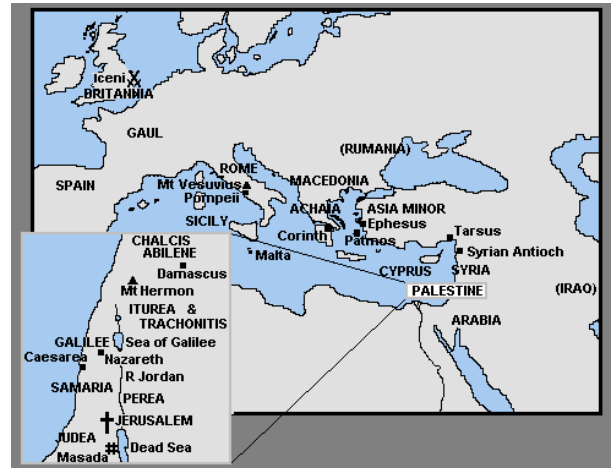
three Kings – the Magi, who have traveled far, following a star, to present their gifts to the Christ child. The 3 Magi (or kings) followed the star **many centuries ago**, but they continue to tell us, **today**, what child this is...

You see, the Church's presentation of the three Kings today is **not** a retelling of history, but it is a **manifestation, NOW**, of who this child is... He is **the** King of Kings, He is **truly** God, He is **the definitive and ultimate** Sacrifice. He is the one who comes to **manifest** God's Kingdom.

You see, God's Kingdom, the Church, extends throughout **all time and space**.

The Bible shows this in the **prophesies** in today's 1st reading & Psalm that speak of worshippers coming to pay homage to God from **far away places**: Sheba, Midian, Ephah, Tarshish, Arabia, from sea to sea, from the river to the ends of the earth...

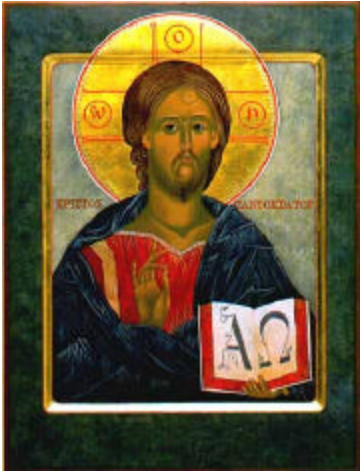
- ? These cities are, literally, in **every direction** on the compass.
- ? So Christ's Kingdom truly includes **every corner of the globe** - wherever human beings live.



This universal Kingdom also extends to **all times**. St Paul makes this connection.

- ? He says that he has been given the task of revealing the mystery of salvation **in full**.
- ? Before him, it had been **partially** revealed to the chosen people of Israel, which traces its origin to Adam himself.
- ? In that sense, then, Christ's Kingdom **reaches back** through the whole history of humanity.
- ? Now the mystery of the Kingdom is being **fully revealed** to **all** nations.
- ? This **implicitly includes** not just the civilizations that St Paul knew about, but **every** civilization and culture that **has** existed or **will** exist.

Christ's **Kingdom**, then, links the very **start** of the human story with its **final conclusion**. Christ is, as the Book of Revelation puts it, the **Alpha and Omega**, the **beginning and the end**.



The coming of these **Magi**, who represent the Gentile nations, teach us that God's Kingdom, this Church that you and I are a part of, extends through **all time and all space**.

You and I are **citizens** of the world's **only** universal Kingdom.

Servant of God Pope John Paul II, in his first encyclical “*On the Redeemer of Man*” said, “The Redeemer of man, Jesus Christ, is the center of the universe and of history.” Think about that – Jesus is the center of the universe – and of all human history... Christ, this child in the manger, this child whom the Magi come to adore, is the center of everything! He is the center of time itself.

Realizing this, the Church has an ancient custom today, Epiphany, of announcing solemnly the dates for all the liturgical celebrations of this New Year. As you listen to the proclamation, see if you can hear how Christ is revealed as the center of all time and of all celebrations...

Here Father sang the [Epiphany Proclamation](#)...

(available at <http://www.rc.net/wilmington/resurrection/songlist.html>)

Did you hear it? The proclamation calls to mind that Christ (in His saving death and resurrection) is the center of all our celebrations. Everything we do in the Church centers on this one event – the establishment of the date of Ash Wednesday, of Advent next year, EVERYTHING centers on Christ’s resurrection – His life, His Kingdom TRULY is the center of the universe and the center of all time. We truly are citizens of the world’s only universal Kingdom!

ILLUSTRATION: The Obelisk in St Peter's Square

In **St Peter's Square**, in **Rome**, there stands an **ancient Egyptian obelisk** - a single block of **granite** in the shape of the Washington monument, almost **100 feet high** and weighing **330 tons**.

- ? It is the **oldest** obelisk in Rome, dating from about **1850 BC**.
- ? At that time it had been **erected** as a **monument to the Pharaoh**, and it watched over two thousand years of Egyptian history - the **longest reigning empire** in history.
- ? It stood there when **Abraham** was called, when **Joseph** was viceroy of Egypt, when **Moses** led his people out of Egypt.



At the time of **Christ**, soon after these Magi came to worship him, the Roman Emperor Caligula **brought it to Rome** as a sign of Rome's **superiority** to conquered Egypt.

- ? There it stood for **four more centuries**, a **symbol** of the Roman Empire, **the largest empire** in human history.
- ? A golden urn with Julius Caesar's **ashes** was placed on it.
- ? It stood in the **arena** where **St Peter himself was martyred**, along with hundreds of other early Christians.
- ? Then the **barbarians** invaded Rome, and in the Middle Ages it fell.
- ? **Ivy** grew around it. It was **half-buried** near the old Basilica.

But the Church **converted** the barbarians, and when a **new Christian culture** emerged and flourished, and St Peter's Basilica was **rebuilt and expanded**, Pope Sixtus V had the obelisk re-erected in the **center of the plaza**.



- ? No longer is it a reminder of the **long-perished** empires of Egypt, Rome and the barbarian hoards.
- ? Now it is topped with a **bronze cross**, and inside that bronze cross is a small fragment of the **true cross**, the cross on which Christ, conquering his Kingdom, was **crucified**.

- ? Now it serves the **universal Kingdom** that will **have no end**, the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION: Offering God Our Gold, Incense, and Myrrh

How much **peace of mind and soul** this should give us!

As Christ's brothers and sisters, we are **plugged in** to a Kingdom that will **never come to an end**, just as we pray in the Creed every week.

As long as our **friendship with Christ** is healthy,

- ? our lives have a **meaning** that no one can take away,
- ? that can **transform** the world around us,
- ? that can give us the **fulfillment, dynamism and sense of purpose** we long for.

The difference between a **mediocre Christian** and a **saint**, a Christian who experiences **fully** all those **benefits** of citizenship in Christ's Kingdom, is **tiny**.

The **mediocre** Christian **believes** in Christ's Kingdom, as all of us do - otherwise, we wouldn't be here today.

But the **saint**, the **mature** Christian, **lives in accordance with that belief**.



- ? If **only** Christ's Kingdom lasts, then our **first priority** in life should be, like the **Magi**, to **serve that Kingdom**.
- ? To **offer God** our **tithe & time & talent** (the gold),
- ? our **prayers and worship** (the incense),
- ? and our **sufferings and sorrows** (the myrrh).

Which of those sectors of our life needs to be **re-offered** to Christ? Which needs to be **laid at the feet** of the baby Jesus?

- ? In our heart, we know, because the Holy Spirit is telling us.
- ? He doesn't want us to be **mediocre**; he wants us to experience the lasting **peace and joy** of Christian maturity.
- ? The same joy that the **Magi** experienced when they **saw the star**.

Today, when we receive our Lord again in Holy Communion, let's lay **at his feet** whatever will **please him most**, whatever he is **asking** for.

With the help of **his grace**, let's leave Mass today more **deeply committed** to living **truly** like the citizen of His Kingdom that we **truly** are.

Jesus truly is the center of the universe and of all time. Jesus truly is the center of all human history. Jesus truly is, or should be, the center of our lives.

What Child is This? This child is the center of all!

