

UNIVERSAL OFFER OF SALVATION

SESSION OF 1/12/06

PRESENTED BY : FR. KRIS MASLOWSKI

Opening Prayer

THE FEAST OF THE THREE KINGS – The Solemnity of Epiphany was God’s revelation to the Gentile World his message of Salvation. In some cultures Epiphany is a more celebrated feast than Christmas. The word “Epiphany” (Epiphania) literally means Revelation. Other significant events in the life of Jesus are concurrently celebrated during this period after Christmas. They are Jesus’ Baptism in the Jordan River and His first miracle at the wedding feast at Cana when Jesus changed water into wine. This is a series of primary events – God’s outreach to the Gentile World when a star led the Magi to the manger; Jesus’ first miracle and the start of His public ministry beginning with His Baptism.

The readings on this Sunday of Epiphany are also associated with revelation. In the first reading God reveals his loving compassion to His people when he brought them out of exile back to Jerusalem (Isaiah 60: 1-6). Selections from Psalm 72 celebrate the pilgrimage of the gentiles to the Holy City Jerusalem; and its refrain prays “Lord, every nation on earth will adore You.” The second reading from Ephesians 3:2-3 and 5-6 has St. Paul, a Pharisee, marvel at the mystery that even the Gentiles have become “sharers in the promise;” a mystery “made known to me by revelation.” Then, of course, the gospel of Mathew 2:1-12 echoes the same theme about pagans, unschooled in the Law and ignorant of the prophets, nonetheless find the Christ and adore him. The preface for the Sunday mass of Epiphany says: “Today you revealed in Christ your eternal plan of salvation and showed him as the light of all peoples.” The Eucharistic Prayer says “From age to age you gather a people to yourself so that from east to west a perfect offering may be made to the glory of your name.” St. Leo the Great preached: “The loving providence of God decreed that all nations should be saved in Christ.” And then the gospel tells the story of the Magi (foreigners) drawn to the Savior by the light of a star. These Gentile astrologers (Wise Men, Magi) who follow the star are the enlightened ones. In the early church the “Enlightenment” referred to Baptism. The magi whose names were Gaspar, Melchoir and Balthasar are believed to be of different ethnic backgrounds – universality. This journey the Catechumens and Candidates have embarked on is also towards enlightenment – Epiphany!

Jesus was proclaimed as the Light of the World – to dispel the darkness that the world was plunged into after the fall of Adam. It is significant that Christmas, the feast of LIGHT, occurs during the winter season when the nights are long and the darkness seems endless. The feasts of the church which celebrate events in the Life of Jesus do not necessarily coincide with their actual occurrence, rather, many were designed to overshadow pagan feasts. It is believed that the 25th of Dec. was dedicated to the Sun God, of course eclipsed by the Son of God.

Catholic Doctrine especially the documents of the Second Vatican Council along with the Catechism of the Catholic Church further explains this universal offer of Gods salvation. In Lumen Gentium (LG:1) it states that “All peoples are attracted to and find salvation in the radiance of God’s light.” The document also stresses God’s mandate to spread this offer of universal salvation to the ends of the earth. The feast of the Three Kings is celebrated in many different ways but is most especially observed in the Latin culture.

To better understand all the rich teachings of the Catholic Church developed by the Church fathers, scholars and theologians since the time of Christ, it is recommended that Catholic Christians refer to the documents of the Second Vatican Council. They have been systematically organized for easy reference. The purpose of convening the Second Vatican Council was, according to the late Pope John the 23rd to illuminate to the modern world the treasures of the Catholic Church which have accumulated over the centuries. The document Lumen Gentium has a special bearing on this Feast of the Epiphany. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is also recommended reading. It is organized into 4 parts: 1) The Profession of Faith; 2) The Celebration of the Christian Mystery; 3) Life in Christ; and 4) Christian Prayer. Each of these sections is subdivided and covers every aspect of our beliefs.

After 4 centuries of oral tradition the teachings of Jesus Christ were organized. The various books of what we now call the Bible were canonized at a council by a process of discernment. In every era of the Church the infallible teachings remain the same they are just presented in the context of the time for better understanding. Further clarification was given as follows:

CANON LAW - covers the Laws of the Church in legal terms – how we do things; who, when, what, where.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH – presents the precise teachings of the Church on various topics; what we believe.

VATICAN II DOCUMENTS - (2 volumes) – expands on our beliefs giving background, foundation, examples, hidden implications, vision, projections for the future; all presented in the context of modern understanding without compromising the truth.

EVERYTHING CONTAINED IN THE ABOVE BOOKS IS ROOTED IN BIBLICAL REVELATION.

Father Kris closed the session with a prayer.