Feast of the Epiphany — January 5, 2025

From the Desk of Fr. Leo

Nobody disputes the fact that Jesus Christ was born on Christmas day. But dating it is quite another matter. Historians have never been able to agree on the year Jesus was born. There is even less certainty about the month. Oddly enough, almost the only scientific data they have to help them in their search is today's star. Astronomers can, with reasonable accuracy, date the appearance of this star. Inter-stellar activity follows its own fixed rhythms and thus the appearance of new stars in different regions can be determined by computation. Fact is stranger than fiction. That part of the Infancy Narrative, one would be most tempted to discard as fairy tale, turns out to be the only thing that is scientifically verifiable. Whatever else has changed since Christ was born, the sky at night remains the same. a Star-gazers today can follow the same star the Wise Men followed.

Western tradition chose three as the number of the Wise Men and even found exotic names for them, Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. Some suggest that they traveled from Persia or South Arabia, though St. Matthew simply indicates that they came from the East. The gospel leaves no doubt that they were individuals of strong conviction, inquiring minds and adventuresome spirit. In a word, intellectuals.

The point should should not be overlooked, that the church has not often shown such welcome to that beleaguered community as its infant-founder. In those rare periods when it did, religion truly blossomed. Oddly enough, the recent epiphany in the communist east traces its origin to an alliance between the churches and the dissidents. They make natural bed-fellows though it often takes persecution to convince them. It was the intellectuals who first discovered the star of Bethlehem. No church, no religion can be authentic, that does not cherish especially its poets, its writers and its thinkers. The true church in the world is an island of "saints and scholars." Stars reveal their secrets only to dreamers.

Their astronomical inquiries brought the Wise men as far as Jerusalem. Astronomy could take them no further. There, they had to consult other experts. The Jews were the people of the Book. Only biblical scholars could shed further light on where the Messiah was to be born. Thus the chief priests and the scribes were called in, through the intervention of Herod. They had not long to wait for an answer. The bible quickly yielded up its awesome secret, "And you Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, for out of you will come a leader who will shepherd my people Israel." Their search had narrowed down to Bethlehem. Inquiries at the inn might well have led them to the manger. The star, the symbol of their inquiring minds, went forward and halted over the place where the child was. Or did they hear a baby crying?

The investigation of the Wise Men is a fine illustration of the Latin adage "intelligentia quarens fidem" (intelligence seeking faith). The message for us is simple. If ever there is to be an Epiphany in our lives, we will need our heads as well as our hearts. We can ill-afford to ignore the insights of intellectuals.

Fr. Leo Alban Asuncion

Mass Intentions for the Week

Tues.	**January 6**	**11:00AM**
Special Intentions		
Wed.	**January 7**	**11:00AM**
Thanksgiving		Ed & Mae
Thur.	**January 8**	**11:00AM**
Special Intentions		
Fri.	**January 9**	**11:00AM**
Special Intentions		
Sat.	**January 10**	**4:30PM**
Mary & Bernard Thomas †		Bill & Diane
Sun.	**January 11**	**9:00AM**
Special Intentions		
Port Costa		**11:00AM**
People of the Parish		

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