



We cannot find Jesus when we search only for what the eyes could perceive. When our concern only is physical, temporal, material [or historical] satisfaction of our longing to know or hold Jesus by our finite minds and finite hands, the more he becomes hidden.

When we are interested only in what can benefit us, e.g., for our prayers to be answered, and not a lasting and close relationship with him, he hides behind our innermost desires. When we search for Jesus outside the guidance of the Star, which is the faith, we will be led inwards as if Jesus is leading us to confront our neediness and longings. After all, it might not be Jesus whom we want to search for but rather solutions to our problems.

Despite being wise men, the Magi opted to be guided by a higher voice -a Star- to arrive at the place of Jesus. They recognized the star because they left behind their neediness, innermost longings, and passion “to know” by naked sight alone. They abandoned their agenda at the feet of Jesus in the forms of frankincense, gold, and myrrh. They allowed themselves to be absorbed by the moment of pure encounter, pure faith, and pure joy.

There was a time in history when protestant scholars wanted to search for the historical Jesus in the Bible. For them, it was important to prove that Jesus was a historical figure and that it is equally important to know what his exact words were.

This is because they accused the early Church of making up words and images of Jesus according to their perception of Jesus. In short, they did not believe that the Jesus presented in the Gospels is the real Jesus. The “Jesus” in the Gospels is an appropriation or an invention of the early Church.

What they did was ridiculous search. They tried to eliminate words and figures of Christ,

which they thought belonged to the primitive Church. The result was a dissected Jesus. He was fragmented. For them, he was merely a liberation worker, a mere prophet, a mere wise man, a mere enlightened man, and a mere human being with extraordinary wisdom.

What these people rejected was the notion that he is the Son of God. His sonship was mere sonship by knowledge (Adolf Von Harnack). The divine sonship of Jesus Christ was the faith of the primitive Church, and its inclusion in the biblical narrative is an intervention by the members of the early Church.

What can we learn from this kind of search for Jesus?

PASTORAL CATECHESIS FOR THE YEAR OF MISSION AD GENTES

A Beautiful Journey of Faith

Fr. James H. Kroeger, MM

This year 2021 the Church in the Philippines marks half a millennium of Christianity. Currently, the Philippines is the world's third largest local Church (after Brazil and Mexico). Of Asia's 120+ million Catholics over 60% are Filipinos. These significant facts invite deeper exploration of our multi-faceted, 500-year-old Philippine Church.

Some may ask: Why celebrate this event? Bishop Broderick Pabillo explains: “This is indeed something to celebrate, for in 500 years the Christian faith in the country has not only survived, but has been a strong influence

in the culture and character of the nation, and is still going strong.” Bishop Pablo David notes that the focus of the 2021 celebration is “not colonialism but the Christian faith” that early Filipinos “welcomed as a gift, albeit from people who were not necessarily motivated by the purest of motives.”

This quinquennial event is not seen to be only a “looking back to the past”; it is also a time of expressing profound gratitude and a looking forward to the future. Having received the gift of faith, it must be deepened, developed, and shared with others through mission. The advice of Jesus to his disciples should be our guide: “What you have received as a gift, give as a gift” (Mt 10:8). As the CBCP logo for 2021 asserts: we are all “gifted to give.”

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon

(Cf. Mal 3:1; 1 Chr 29:12)

(Recited when there is no opening song.)

Behold, the Lord, the Mighty One, has come; and kingship is in his grasp, and power and dominion.

Greeting

(The sign of the cross is made here.)

P — Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

All — **And with your spirit.**

Introduction

(These [or similar words] may be used to address the assembly.)

P — Today, we celebrate the Solemnity of the Epiphany of our Lord. “Epiphany” means manifestation. The birth of Jesus is meant not only for the people of Israel but for all nations, represented by the Magi or the “Three Kings.” May this revelation shine forth on everyone so that the gift of salvation may be shared by all.

Penitential Act

P — Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries. *(Pause)*

P — You were sent to heal the contrite of heart: Lord, have mercy.

All — **Lord, have mercy.**

P — You came to call sinners: Christ, have mercy.

All — **Christ, have mercy.**

P — You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us: Lord, have mercy.

All — **Lord, have mercy.**

P — May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

All — **Amen.**

Gloria

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory,

Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect

P — Let us pray. *(Pause)*

O God, who on this day revealed your Only Begotten Son to the nations by the guidance of a star, grant in your mercy, that we, who know you already by faith, may be brought to behold the beauty of your sublime glory.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

All — **Amen.**

LITURGY OF THE WORD



First Reading (Is 60:1–6) *(Sit)*

The prophet Isaiah foresees the day when God will be worshipped not only by the Israelites whom he will gather from dispersion but also by pagan nations.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

RISE UP in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the LORD shines upon you. See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the LORD shines, and over you appears his glory. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you: your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of

their nurses.

Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow, for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you, the wealth of the nations shall be brought to you. Caravans of camels shall fill you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah; all from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.

— The word of the Lord.

All — **Thanks be to God.**

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 72)

R — **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

Amante

Lord, eve - ry na - tion
on earth will a - dore you.

1. O God, with your judgment endow the king,/ and with your justice, the king's son;/ he shall govern your people with justice/ and your afflicted ones with judgment. **(R)**

2. Justice shall flower in his days,/ and profound peace, till the moon be no more./ May he rule from sea to sea,/ and from the River to the ends of the earth. **(R)**

3. The kings of Tarshish and the Isles shall offer gifts;/ the kings of Arabia and Seba shall bring tribute./ All kings shall pay him homage,/ all nations shall serve him. **(R)**

4. For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out,/ and the afflicted when he has no one to help him./ He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor;/ the lives of the poor he shall save. **(R)**

Second Reading (Eph 3:2–3a, 5–6)

The apostle Paul declares that in Christ Jesus, the loving plan of the Father is now revealed: the Gentiles become sharers with the Jews in the gift of salvation.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

BROTHERS AND SISTERS: You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for your benefit, namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation. It was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

— The word of the Lord.

All — Thanks be to God.

Alleluia (Mt 2:2)

All — Alleluia, alleluia. We saw the star at its rising and have come to do him homage. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Mt 2:1–12)

P — A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
All — Glory to you, O Lord.

WHEN JESUS was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: *And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.*" Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search

diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

— The Gospel of the Lord

All — Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (*Sit*)

Profession of Faith (*Stand*)

All — I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

(At the words that follow up to and including and became man, all bow.)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and

the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

P — In Christ Jesus, all have become children of the Father and heirs of salvation. Let us pray that we may be worthy of this great gift. We shall say:

R — Lord of light, hear our prayer.

C — For the universal Church: May she bring together men and women from afar and lead them all to the light of Christ's Gospel. We pray: **(R)**

C — For Church leaders and missionaries: May they gather into the community of the people of God the rich diversity of gifts of peoples and cultures. We pray: **(R)**

C — For those whose lives are covered by the darkness of sin, unbelief, and suffering: May they see the light of salvation and walk in its shining radiance. We pray: **(R)**

C — For those who do not believe in Christ: May they draw close to God and to Jesus Christ by sincerely following what is right and good. We pray: **(R)**

C — For interreligious dialogue: May the hurtful things of the past not stand in the way of mutual respect, yearning for truth, and the search for God on the part of Christians and non-Christians alike. We pray: **(R)**

C — Let us pray for the urgent concerns of our community and our personal intentions (*pause*). We pray: **(R)**

P — Heavenly Father, let the light of your Son shine within us so that we may be guided through the pathways of life and be united with you in the glory of heaven.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST



Presentation of the Gifts *(Stand)*

P — Pray, brethren...

All — May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings *(Stand)*

P — Look with favor, Lord, we pray, on these gifts of your Church, in which are offered now not gold or frankincense or myrrh, but he who by them is proclaimed, sacrificed, and received, Jesus Christ.

Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

All — Amen.

Preface of the Epiphany

P — The Lord be with you.

All — And with your spirit.

P — Lift up your hearts.

All — We lift them up to the Lord.

P — Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All — It is right and just.

P — It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For today you have revealed the mystery of our salvation in Christ as a light for the nations, and, when he appeared in our mortal nature, you made us new by the glory of his immortal nature.

And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim:

All — Holy, Holy, Holy... *(Kneel)*

Acclamation *(Stand)*

All — When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer



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All — Our Father...

P — Deliver us, Lord...

All — For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever.

Invitation to Peace

Invitation to Communion
(Kneel)

P — Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

All — Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon
(Cf. Mt 2:2)

We have seen his star in the East, and have come with gifts to adore the Lord.

Prayer after Communion
(Stand)

P — Let us pray. *(Pause)*

Go before us with heavenly light, O Lord, always and everywhere, that we may perceive with clear sight and revere with true affection the mystery in which you have willed us to participate. Through Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.

All — And with your spirit.

Solemn Blessing

P — Bow down for the blessing.
(Pause)

May God, who has called you out of darkness into his wonderful light, pour out in kindness his blessing upon you and make your hearts firm in faith, hope, and charity.

All — Amen.

P — And since in all confidence you follow Christ, who today appeared in the world as a light shining in darkness, may God make you, too, a light for your brothers and sisters.

All — Amen.

P — And so when your pilgrimage is ended, may you come to him whom the Magi sought as they followed the star and whom they found with great joy, the Light from Light, who is Christ the Lord.

All — Amen.

P — And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, (†) and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.

All — Amen.

Dismissal

P — Go forth, the Mass is ended.

All — Thanks be to God.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P — The Lord be with you.