

## Epiphany

I don't know if you have a Sat Nav to help you find directions, to find your way to your destination. Perhaps you still prefer to find the route on a map, or maybe google the route. We know that the Wise Men, didn't have those aids. They were by various accounts, scientists, astronomers, astrologers, philosophers and mathematicians. They had seen this star and knew it foretold the birth of a special child, the King of the Jews and they set out on a journey to follow it.

It was their knowledge that enabled them to set out. Understandably they thought the King of the Jews would be born in the palace in Jerusalem, so they arrive at Herod's Court and ask his help. Herod though threatened by the thought of a rival wants to know the answer to their question as to the where the child was going to be born. So he in his turn has to ask his experts, the chief priests and scribes, who had studied the scriptures and so knew where the Messiah was to be born. It was their help that enabled the Magi to go to Bethlehem and to find the child, whom they were seeking.

So what does this say to us about our own journey, our life's journey as we seek for meaning, as we seek for Truth, as we seek for God in our lives. We all need help to find our way on the journey through life and help comes from many different sources,. A major source of help on our journey is the Scriptures. It is here that we that we learn

about God and the story of our faith community. Another thing that helps us is our Church family and other Christians who are also on the journey. But God is guiding us in all sorts of other ways and uses all sorts of people to help us. We are helped not only by what is good and inspiring, but we can also be helped by our experience of what is hard and difficult.

Sometimes when we are on a journey particularly when we are young we want to get to our destination quickly. The cry goes up "Are we there yet?". This journey is that of our lives. Our search is for meaning in our lives. In that journey there are many destinations that are part of the journey but not the final goal. Destinations enroute, are the schools we go to, our families and friends, the jobs we have, how we earn a living, how we spend our retirement. The journey, our search, our lives are in a strange way a vital part of the destination. We need to bring all the gifts we have and all the gifts that we experience from other people in our lives. The journey itself, the now is important. For us in this life there is only today, yesterday is passed and tomorrow never comes.

At this Epiphanytide the gifts that the Magi bring can be important symbols of gifts that we too need to give to God as we seek to find him and to serve him in our lives.

Born a king on Bethlehem's plain,  
Gold I bring to crown Him again,  
King forever, ceasing never  
Over us all to reign.

Gold I bring. What is the gold of our lives. The most important and valuable gift of love. This is true of all of our relationships and is true of our relationship with God. God loves us. As the words of In the bleak mid-winter put it.

What can I give Him,  
Poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd  
I would bring a lamb,  
If I were a wise man  
I would do my part,  
Yet what I can I give Him,  
Give my heart.

Frankincense to offer have I.  
Incense owns a Deity nigh.  
Prayer and praising all men raising,  
Worship Him, God on high.

The Christ Child Jesus, whom the Magi journeyed to find is God. We can all get caught up with the image of the baby in the manger, but this baby is God with us. The incense that we use is a sign of our worship of God. It reminds us of our call our need to worship Jesus. God is the only one

whom we worship. We have this mystery of being so close to this God of love, who is closer to us than we are to ourselves but who is also our God whom we need to worship and adore him. O come let us adore him Christ the Lord.

Myrrh is mine: it's bitter perfume Breaths a life of gathering gloom. Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding dying, Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

Perhaps the most difficult gift is that of Myrrh. Myrrh comes from a plant which grows in dry stony soil and has many healing properties. For everyone there will be hard and difficult things in life. We have many good things in our lives, but it is more difficult to deal with the hard and difficult experiences, illness, suffering and death. Myrrh is a symbol of the whole of our lives, the difficult and sad parts, as well as the good and the healing. God is with us in it all and in offering the whole of our lives we are acknowledging that and asking that we may know God's presence in it all. It is a symbol of death the end of this physical life but this Jesus whose body was sealed in a stone cold tomb, burst out of it in the new life we celebrate at Easter. Death is not the end. As one of the Easter Hymns puts it. "Christ is Risen, we are Risen".

This is the end of the journey, our journey to be risen with Christ. So let us offer, the myrrh of our whole lives, the incense of our worship and the gold of our love and may God's light guide us on our journey.