

## EPIPHANY

St Luke, positions the birth of Christ in the context of world events. Caesar Augustus, for instance, orders a census of the whole world to be taken. His birth will have cosmic significance – he will be a light to all men and women of goodwill despite the fact that He came into this world far from the limelight, as it were, and in very humble circumstances – almost unnoticed.

In their search the wise men were guided by the light of the star. Today's feast represents all those who are guided by the light of faith to seek what is true. Truth is not presented to us on a plate - we have to seek and search for it like the Wise men did. We know the Church teaches the truth about man and his salvation. But we need to make that truth our own before it can guide our way of thinking and acting in this world. Ultimately, like the wise men, Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life will be the object of our search.

The Epiphany also represents those who follow the light of conscience. There are many people, some of whom we might know, who appear quite content not to be religious. Some even boast about it. However, we've all got a conscience whether religious or not. We may ignore it, but it won't ignore us. Unresolved issues of conscience have a strange way of re-surfacing in our lives in other ways. Those who come to Mass each Sunday are given the opportunity to have their consciences more finely tuned, as it were, by Gospel Truth – certainly more than those who live purely secular lives. These people, for instance, often form their conscience on what the majority of people in society say or do. St Augustine says: 'wrong is wrong even if everybody is doing it, and right is right even if nobody is doing it'

This is where Herod enters the scene. Yes, he was interested in the truth but in denial about it. The 'Light of the World', even as a baby, was already a threat to him and so sets about extinguishing it. But the ghost of Herod lives on. Is there anyone whom we perceive as a threat to our mistaken notion of liberty that we'd like to be shut of? Many babies, for instance, are aborted solely because they are inconvenient to young, busy people and put a cap on their liberty. The same could apply to the old.

"The light which is Jesus had come into the world but men had shown that they preferred the darkness. Even though we have the light of Faith

and conscience to light up our way in this world there is no guarantee we'll act in accordance with them.

The Magi 'opened their treasures'. Perhaps our treasure to Jesus for 2016 will be to open our hearts more generously to the light of His Truth and, like the wise men, not rest until we find the object of our search, Jesus Christ Himself. In this way we share in His Epiphany and are a light to the world in which we live.

## **QUESTIONS**

- 1. Pope Benedict said that 'Christ was born in a stable in order to humble human pride'. Discuss*
- 2. The Magi travelled from afar in search of the Christ-child, who is Truth Incarnate. In what ways do we search like the wise men and deepen our knowledge of the true faith?*
- 3. 'Conscience is the 'voice of God' within us. (John Henry Newman). In what ways should we be better informing our consciences? Is there such a thing as an erroneous conscience?*
- 4. Herod sought to do away with the 'baby Jesus' thereby extinguishing the 'Light of the Word'. In that sense he contributed to a 'culture of death', a phrase coined by St John Paul 11. Are we doing enough at a local level to curb its evil influence? Discuss*