

EPIPHANY (A,B and C)

St Luke, positions the birth of Christ in the context of Imperial Rome and world events. Caesar Augustus, for instance, orders a census of the whole world to be taken. His birth will have worldwide significance. He will be a light to all the nations.

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 and reason 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 our salvation. But we need to take that truth on board if it's to have a bearing on how we live in the here and now. 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 which needs to be illumined by the light of reason and faith. There are many people, some of whom we might know, who are indifferent towards all things religious. However, we've all got a conscience whether religious or not. It's the voice of God within. We may ignore it, but it won't ignore us. An ignored conscience has a strange way of re-surfacing in other ways in our lives.

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 never darken the door. The danger is that many who are schooled in the ways of the world will form their conscience on public opinion alone and be led astray. St Augustine writes: 'wrong is wrong even if everybody is doing it, right is right even if nobody is doing it'.

This is where Herod enters the scene. Yes, he was interested in finding out the whereabouts of baby Jesus but for sinister

reasons. 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 mistakenly perceive to be a **threat to us** that we'd like out of the way? The baby in the womb, God forbid, might become for some misguided souls an inconvenience hampering their future plans. The same misguided reasoning could underpin the euthanasia debate. The right to die for some may be seen by others as a duty to die especially if they feel **'in the way'** and unloved. Yes, the spirit of Herod lives on.

"The light which is Jesus came into the world but men had shown they preferred the darkness. On one occasion Jesus actually wept over Jerusalem because people snubbed his saving message. Even though we have the light of Faith and reason to guide us there is no guarantee we'll act in accordance with any of these.

The Magi 'opened their treasures'. Perhaps our treasure to Jesus for 2024 will be to focus the eyes of our minds more resolutely on Jesus, the light of the world and live by His truth. In this way we share in His Epiphany and become a light to the world in which we live.