

EPIPHANY (B)

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 man and his salvation. But we need to make that **truth our own** if it is to have a bearing on how we live in the here and now. Ultimately, like the wise men, Christ who is the Light of the World, 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 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. An ignored conscience has 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 never darken the door. The danger is that many will form their conscience on public opinion alone and be led astray. St Augustine says: '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 the truth about Jesus 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 disappear into thin air? The baby in the womb, instead of being a gift of God, can be seen by some as threatening their plans for the future often leading to drastic outcomes. The same could underpin the euthanasia debate. The right to die becomes the duty to die. Yes, the spirit of Herod lives on.

"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 reason to guide our way in this world there is no guarantee we'll act in accordance with either of them.

The Magi 'opened their treasures'. Perhaps our treasure to Jesus for 2018 will be to open our hearts more generously to the light of His Truth. In this way we share in His Epiphany and are a light to the world in which we live and indeed beyond.