

EPIPHANY (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 universal 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** for it to have a bearing on our lives in the here and now. Ultimately, like the wise men, Christ who is the Truth personified, 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 we believe in God or not. We may ignore it, but it won't ignore us. St John tells us that 'if we cannot be condemned by our conscience we need not be afraid in God's presence'.

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 of a church. The worry is that the general population 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 what the wise men had to say about Jesus but only to further his own sinister ends. 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 see as a **threat to our way of life** that we'd like to have disappear? The 'unwanted' baby comes to mind. Should not our stance in this regard replicate that of Elizabeth in last Sunday's gospel when she cried out to Mary, *'blessed is the fruit of your womb'*. The same misguided reasoning underpins the euthanasia debate where many old and sick people may pick up vibes even from their family that they have outlived their usefulness. Yes, there's a bit of Herod in all of us.

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

The Magi 'opened their treasures'. Aided by the light of Faith, perhaps our treasure to Jesus for 2019 will be to open our minds more resolutely to His truth. In this way we share in Christ's Epiphany and become a light to the world in which we live – and indeed beyond.