

Epiphany

On Thursday evening I watched the Funeral Mass for Pope Emeritus Benedict. I went to the Vatican website and saw the last part of the Mass live and then went back again to see the parts that I missed. And all this was on my Ipad. Many of us take it for granted that we have the technology now to immediately find the answers to most of the questions we have. We can watch or listen to just about anything that we want at the time we want it. We can go for a walk and listen to the music that we choose from the phone in our pocket and ear buds in our ears.

The technology that so easily allows us to see and hear so much can take our breath away. But the men in our gospel story today would have been very much at home with today's technology. They are called Magi, a Greek word that describes a person possessed of special and superior knowledge, an expert in some field, especially astronomy or astrology. They made their journey to Jesus by following a star. They timed their journey by calculating when this star first appeared. If they were making their journey today they would probably be using a GPS, which of course depends completely upon things that are up there in the heavens.

The Magi needed more than science and technology to make their way to Bethlehem. They needed the help of

those who knew the Scriptures to make the last leg of their journey. They consulted Herod, thinking that he might know where the infant king of the Jews had been born. He was the last one to be asked that question, for it stirred up in him all the paranoia and insecurity of someone who feared that his kingship could be taken away from him. But he knew where to find the answer. The Jewish scribes told him that it must be in Bethlehem in Judea that the Messiah is to be born. "For out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." They quote the prophet Micah, and then add to it a little part from the address to David at the commencement of his reign, found in the second book of Samuel. By putting these two sayings together they ironically admit that this new born king will rule in quite a different way to the one who was ruling them now.

The star appears again to lead them on. "The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage." No mention is made here of Joseph. This child is the Son of God. The magi fall on their knees, not just to give him honour as a king, but to worship him as God.

They have brought gifts for the new born king. There were no computer games or ipods or digital cameras in their baskets. But the gifts of gold, frankincense and

myrrh have been able to speak to us of who Jesus is: this king and priest who came to offer his life in love for us.

The story of the Magi has fascinated people of faith from the time that Matthew wrote it. It somehow touches into the journey that all of us are making as we try to find our way to Jesus. That these wise men were from the East, and not of Jewish background invites us to journey more readily with them. That they asked so many questions and used science and technology to make their way to Jesus, can speak to us even more powerfully today. But they were also people of faith, who were able to stand in wonder and awe in those dark desert skies full of stars. They were people who made time to be still and to reflect upon what God was revealing to them.

The Magi can help us all to make our way to Jesus. With a combination of human learning and knowledge, the necessary advice of others and the mysterious intervention of God, we too can find our way to the Lord. And today, I think that the Lord would expect us to use whatever we are familiar with in the world of technology to use those things to help us deepen our faith. If we can use a smart phone to listen to music, then we should be able to use it to listen to the Scriptures or help us to pray. If we read the paper each day online now, then that is how we can be reading the Scriptures each day.

The celebration of the Epiphany is all about searching for and finding Jesus. In whatever way we choose to do it we too will find Jesus with Mary his mother. Today we fall on our knees to worship him. We bring the best of what we have, and we offer it to him. We listen to that word from God that will help us to understand that we cannot take the same road once we have found Jesus. We ask the Lord to help us to know what road we need to take so that we can eventually find our way home, home with the God who sent us on this journey to find his Son.