

## **EPIPHANY 2017 HOMILY**

1. Darkness of this season is a good symbol of the world we live in
  - a. The world is truly a dark place, wars, suicide bombings, human trafficking, political turmoil
  - b. People like to talk about the good old days, but they never really existed
  - c. There have always been issues of violence, hatreds, racism
  - d. All we have to do is look at the mythologies of Greeks, Romans, Norway
  - e. In these mythologies, even the gods are fighting each other, raping women, deceiving human disciples
2. Myths were an attempt by people of their era to explain why there is so much evil and suffering
  - a. First ten chapters of Genesis were Israel's attempt
  - b. Difference Israel does not try to blame evil on whims of gods
  - c. Israel believe that God intended a world of goodness, but human weakness got in the way
  - d. So we see Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the flood, the tower of Babylon
3. Israel believed that God began to intervene by calling Abraham to become the father of a new people who would populate many nations
  - a. Human weakness continues to get in the way
  - b. The story of Jacob, grandson of Abraham
  - c. He has 12 sons, but they get jealous of Joseph because he is a favorite of Jacobs
  - d. Though they sell him as a slave to Egypt, begin to see God working to bring good out of evil
  - e. By the power of God, Joseph moves from being a slave to being second only to the Pharaoh during a seven-year famine
  - f. Joseph brings his brothers to Egypt and establish a group of people who would later become Israel
4. The covenant Moses makes between Israel and God establishes Israel as God's shining star for the world
  - a. By living out the Ten commandments Israel witnesses that there is a God who cares for His people and can be trusted in contrast to the pagan gods
  - b. Israel will fail to live up to the covenant at times
  - c. God disciplines them by allowing them to be conquered by their neighbors and led off to exile
  - d. Despite the exiles, God continues to keep the people of Israel together as a people who know God's wish for them through the law
5. In today's reading from the prophet Isaiah, God reveals His hope for the world

- a. Israel is to become a true shining star that will guide the peoples of the world to the one true God
  - b. Through Israel all peoples will be invited to see that there is a God that they can depend on
  - c. In the darkness of the world, God's glory will shine upon Israel
  - d. God promises a day when representatives from the nation will bring gifts of gold and frankincense
6. Notice how Matthew's gospel has picked up on some of these images'
- a. A star in the middle of a dark sky points the way to glory
  - b. Magi representing the wisdom of the East bring gifts of gold and frankincense
  - c. They bring these gifts to a child born in Bethlehem, a descendant of the greatest Israelite king, David
  - d. The gold represent royalty, the child is a king; frankincense as the child being a sign of God's presence
  - e. Third spice Matthew mentions as a gift is myrrh, an intoxicating, perfumed, bitter spice
  - f. Matthew associates myrrh with the death of Jesus
  - g. While on the cross someone mixes myrrh with wine and offers it to Jesus, probably as a kind of painkiller, which Jesus refuses
  - h. Jesus is buried in a burial cloth in a mixture of myrrh and aloes
7. Matthew is illustrating the great Christian paradox
- a. Jesus is the light, through Him Israel fulfills its role as a shining star for the world
  - b. Jesus way of being light is unexpected
  - c. Unlike the kings who try to lord it over others with power and wealth
    - i. They only bring the world deeper into darkness
  - d. Jesus rules from the humility of the cross
  - e. He provides the ultimate service, being sacrificed for the forgiveness of our sins
  - f. He invites us to follow Him carrying our own cross
  - g. Joining Jesus on our own cross, we assist Him in bringing light to the darkness as St. Paul says being his co-heirs of glory
  - h. We spread the light of the Gospel by becoming co-heirs with Jesus through the cross
8. The paradox of the Cross is that through love and service we bring light and joy to the world
- a. The normal ways of the world, power and self-seeking lead only to darkness
  - b. Jesus invites us to embrace the light, to join Him in eternal joy