

## **FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY [ABC]**

*Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12*

*Things are not always as they seem.*

Take Herod. Herod was a charismatic leader whose ambitious appetite moves him to the top of the food chain. If Herod were alive today, his ascent to power and dominating personality would be among the favorite discussion topics by TV's political and economic talking heads.

Herod's eyes were fixed incessantly on one thing: power – that it, *his* power. Herod would be lauded by many contemporary media types for his extreme focus. Herod stands where the action is; indeed, he creates the action.

*Things are not always as they seem.*

The Gospel writer Matthew presents us with another point of view about the very same Herod.

According to Matthew's perspective [which we just heard in today's Gospel reading], Herod is a quibbling, temperamental and pathetic figure. Oh, for sure, in Herod's *own* eyes he is mighty and dominant and in the eyes of those whom he surrounds himself he evokes fear and anxiety.

However, the Gospel writer Matthew reports that in the midst of the real action taking place, Herod barely is noticeable.

Far, far away from *little* Herod, mysterious figures emerge from a distant country who could care less about Herod's pitiful political games. The magi are intensely surveying the nighttime sky.

Nighttime sky? Are you kidding me? They should be following Herod's political games, they should be devouring Herod's blogs and tweets – after all Herod is the man, Herod is a player.

The magi could not care less about Herod because they are all about recognizing signs of *real* action – that is, signs of Almighty God.

That, friends, is why the magi managed to see the special star at its first rising. And that is why they did not lose sight of the star.

- A star designating the arrival of a new king.
- A star whose meaning announced the restoration of order between heaven and earth.

*Things are not always as they seem.*

The mysterious magi were looking for the *right* thing. They were attending to the *right* story. Even as the superficially fascinating stories of the culture were of most interest to the masses, the magi were unaffected by the top pop happenings

How could they resist the urge to click time and again the most popular story links of the day and not be caught up in all the superficial political intrigue and gossip?

Because they were intensely seeking to see and experience the *real* action.

Thanks be to God that *things are not always as they seem*.

Friends, there are two very different versions of things happening.

Herod is terribly anxious and worried when the magi tell him they are seeking a newborn king. What does Herod do? Herod assembles his own “wise men” who explain the prophecy of a king to be born one day in Bethlehem.

Then Herod plays the game of piety and calls the magi to himself to try to learn where the newborn king is so that he can kill the child.

This maneuvering is so typical of the world. We could insert different names and different places and sadly report the same despicable action occurring still today.

Do you see the different accounts of the same action?

Herod does not welcome the alignment of heaven and earth because that puts his ways under judgment. Herod’s sights and those around him are set on the petty little corner of the Roman empire.

The Magi are see the real action for they catch sight of bolder and grander spiritual perspective within which worldly events actually take place.

These two visions are permanently colliding. This is why the “Herod’s” of 2011 – and they are still around – will always obstruct, will always persecute will always seek to destroy the magi of the world.

When you seek Christ, expect opposition from the “Herod’s of 2011” because you will get it.

The magi are overjoyed at seeing the star. This is the joy for which we have been made – not the petty joys that the world can give, but the deep, abiding joy that is found we see and make our way to the Holy One of God whose arrival has realigned heaven and earth.

How does Matthew's reporting of the story end? The magi went back to their country by a different route. Of course they did!

Everyone who truly encounters Christ finds themselves taking a different route.