

January 3, 2016 Divine Light, True Light Homily

Brothers and sisters, in the so-called entertainment capital of the world, Hollywood, a popular tourist attraction draws some ten million people annually. It is the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Along fifteen blocks of Hollywood Boulevard, over 2,500 brass stars are embedded. Each of the stars bears the name of a celebrity. (Actor, recording artist, director, etc), who achieved fame and notoriety in the entertainment industry. Celebrities have long been considered superstars and worthy of slavish devotion by their legion of fans. Back in the 1940's, the publicity department of a major studio, MGM, came up with an ingenious slogan for their bevy of notable actors: "more stars than there are under the heavens". The "star" and the "acting person" are oftentimes indistinguishable. Even today these luminaries lead us, direct us and influence us. It is extraordinary the great lengths to which people will go in order to see a "movie star"!

The birth of the King of the Jews was announced by a scientific phenomenon, the rising of a star, visible from afar. The language of the star contained a message of hope. The evangelist St. Matthew writes, "And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them until it came and stopped over the place where the child was" (Mt. 2:9).

Biblical scholars are of the view that the Magi (Wise Men) were scientists, likely astronomers, who closely tracked the movements of heavenly bodies... the relative position of the stars, the phases of the moon... and claimed to read them as omens of earthly events.

In reality, they were in search of the True Light that would point out the path to take in life. They set off on a journey in response to a divine call. As restless souls, they were seekers after truth. The Wise Men represent the journey of humanity to Christ, the Light of the World. The erstwhile Pope Benedict has written, "It is not the star that determines the child's destiny... it is the child (Jesus Christ) that directs the star".

Some random thoughts:

The wise men themselves became stars shining in the firmament. They show us the way to Jesus. Not only that, they show us what our response in faith ought to be in light of the profound mystery: "They prostrated themselves and did him homage" (Mt. 2:11). Let us not neglect the importance of worship; Second, each of us is invited to imitate the service that the star rendered to the Magi... guiding others to Jesus; Third, we are called to be guided by the star, which for all the baptized is the Word of God. Let us follow it in our lives; Fourth, The biblical scholar Scott Hahn notes that the visit of the Magi is a brief episode in the Christian story. Nevertheless "It signals the salvation of the whole world. God had extended joy to the world, and the world responded with worship and adoration."

In Dante's masterpiece, "The Divine Comedy", he ponders the mystery of the Divine Light. He writes: "In God is the love which moves the sun and the other stars". Let us turn away from all those false lights, which eventually fade and pass out of existence and turn our attention to the illuminating presence of the Christ child, the bearer of the True Light and ultimately the destination of all those in a personal quest for truth and joy.

Amen!