The Epiphany of the Lord

Gospel text (*Mt* 2:1-12): When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him (…). Then Herod called the magi secretly (…).

After their audience with the king they set out. 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. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (…).

Epiphany: Jesus manifests himself to all peoples

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Today, the mystery of Christmas shines on the Earth, spreading as it were in concentric circles: first of all, it shines on the Holy Family of Nazareth, in the shepherds of Bethlehem and, finally, reaching the Magi who are the first-fruits of the pagan people. The palaces of the rulers of Jerusalem, where the news of the Messiah’s birth does not give rise to joy but to fear and hostile reactions, are left in the shadow.

What amazes us about the Magi is that they prostrated themselves before a simple baby in His mother’s arms, not in the setting of a royal palace but, on the contrary, in the poverty of a stable. How was this possible? There is no doubt that they were persuaded by the sign of the star. But even the star would not have sufficed had the Magi not been people inwardly open to the truth.

—In comparison with Herod, beset with his interest of power and riches, the Magi were directed toward the goal of their quest, and when they found it, although they were cultured men, they behaved like the shepherds of Bethlehem: they recognized the sign and adored the Child.