

## Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson 6th January 2022 - The Epiphany

The Epiphany is a celebration of faith. The feast celebrates how the divinity of Jesus was manifested in a very special way in this story, at his baptism by John and at the wedding feast of Cana.

There are three groups of people in today's gospel story. Herod and the political set in Jerusalem: the scribes, priest and religious leaders, and the Magi, the wise men who came from the east.

The wise men stand for the believer: They represent all people who make an honest search for the truths of life. Herod the unbeliever. The wise men observed the star and let themselves be led forward to where it stopped over Bethlehem where the young child was. Their travels were but expressions of the inner journey they were making leading them to faith and adoration.

The gifts they offered were **symbolic**. It is interesting that our word symbolic comes from the Greek for the movement of things together towards unification.

The opposite movement is '**diabolic**' literally the tearing of things apart.

Herod is the unbeliever in the story. No signs could move him to journey towards that house of faith. He remained where he was. The great king Herod: deeply upset by the news and 'so was the whole of Jerusalem.' These were the power- people whose only religion is their own advancement. But the tyrant is always desperately insecure.

Herod is threatened by a tiny infant. The tyrants of history, from Pharaoh to Herod: from Cromwell to Hitler, from Stalin to present day tyrants in many countries, think nothing of huge massacres in the interests of their own survival. Herod, shaking at the idea of a child who might succeed him, usurp his dynasty, plans to protect his interests and see off the newcomer. He has not amassed his power and fortune to see it taken from him by some stranger. Herod had murdered many suspected adversaries - even family members. Herod is power crazy, paranoid.

Was Herod genuinely interested in paying homage to the infant king? In no way. Herod was only interested in one god...himself.

He shows how selfishness can take over our lives, so that we become blind to the light of God that comes to us. The diabolical mind cannot let go of control, or embrace in love, or bow in homage. It separates the details, tears asunder – tears the child from its mother's breast and killed. To kill is the ultimate diabolical act.

I was interested in the Reflection in the Sunday Message you have for today, on patriotism and nationalism. The believer's faith of the Gentile wise men stands in contrast to the cynical cunning of Herod.

Our act of faith involves our whole being and journey through life following the footprints of the One who made them.

Matthew's story is an invitation to journey with the flickering light of the rising star and the wisdom of scripture and enter into the house of faith, falling in adoration. Venite adoremus: come let us adore him.

Canon Philip Dyson

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