

These readings for the Epiphany are about the mysterious and personal relationship between the Faithful and Jesus Christ. This is the first time Personal Notes reflect a third time over scriptures already seen. My intention remains to build upon the previous Notes without including those Notes as a separate attachment, unless requested. Epiphany may be the only reading remaining the same in all three liturgical cycles. As Saint Ambrose (339-397) put it, “no one comes seeking Christ in sloth.”<sup>1</sup> The Magi did not do that and neither have the Faithful through the cycles of the ages.

In a spirit of zeal, I renew my concern for the New Hope Community that now occupies the former Bethlehem Monastery of Poor Clares. The New Hope Community web site, <http://www.hopeonline.cc>, recommends Bible Study, at Spiritual Formation, SoulJourn. I keep wondering about linking up with this community. So far, nothing but prayer seems appropriate for my zeal.

When repeating readings, my intention is: (1) to incorporate research not yet incorporated but (2) not to reexamine research already incorporated. I will read what I have already written but will not re-document that material when I use it. I will be happy to send what I have already written to anyone interested. Because of computer technology, that task should be relatively easy.

During the year, we should reach Gospels that I have already translated from the Greek. When that happens, my intention is to translate the Epistles, which is what I am doing for today.

## **Isaiah 60:1-6**

Isaiah sees the Faithful as something special, as Ephesians more carefully spells out. The ancient prophets of the First Testament spoke to the Faithful throughout the ages. With the New Testament, Saint Ambrose asks the question, “If Mary learns from the shepherds, why do you turn from the teaching of the priests?”<sup>2</sup> In the

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<sup>1</sup> Ambrose, in *Luke Ch. 2*, in “Exposition from the Catena Aurea,” Christmas Day; The Gospel of the Mass of the Aurora,” in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 108.

<sup>2</sup> II St. Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor, “The Beginning of the Church,” CSEL (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum), Ambr. iv, pp. 69-71 in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 118.

Greek, Ephesians 3:5 implicitly includes the Faithful among the prophets to whom the Spirit revealed the promise in Jesus Christ.

## **Psalm 72:1-2; 7-8, 10-11; 12-13**

The Lectionary uses Psalm 72 as follows:

<u>Reading</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>verses</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
4A	19-20	1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17 (cf. 7)	Advent 2
20ABC	119	1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13 (cf. 11)	Epiphany = Today

The Advent Responsorial antiphon is about justice; the Responsorial antiphon for today, the Epiphany, is about adoration; verse 17 in Advent is about blessings from a messiah, verses 10-11 for today, the Epiphany, is about people paying homage to a messiah. Christianity is mysterious and personal to each of the Faithful.

## **Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6**

In verse 6, the Greek plays up a threefold relationship between the Messiah and the Faithful: coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners. Ephesians recognizes a new covenant in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.

In verse 6, the Greek for *people* is *sons of men*. In the Gospels, Jesus refers to himself as the *son of man*, adding to the personal mystery of the relationship between the Faithful and their Christ.

## **Matthew 2:2**

With modern astronomy, especially through the Hubble telescope, the universal aspect of the Christmas star shines in a very special way on the present. The star of Bethlehem also makes the point Symeon Metaphrastes made in the late Tenth Century. God might have come with thunder and lightning, shaking the earth and frightening people to death, but that is not his way. God comes gently, to save, enlighten and comfort in his love, rather than to cast down.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Metaphrastes, in the "Catena G.F.": in "Exposition from the Catena Aurea," "Christmas Day; The Gospel of the Mass of Midnight," in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 103.

To add some Christmas background,<sup>4</sup> Metaphrastes told the story of the original Eastern Orthodox Saint Nicholas who saved three sisters from being sold into prostitution.<sup>5</sup> The term *slave* is a derivate of *Slav*. Thinking racially; there is a lot to meditate on here. The divine bounty extends to everyone personally and mysteriously.

## Matthew 2:1-12

The Jewish leaders who cooperate with Herod by quoting Sacred Scripture that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem, exemplify false teachers and unworthy shepherds. The Jewish leaders know how to read Scripture, without understanding what it means. With Herod, the Jewish leaders fear the coming of Emmanuel and, later, condemn him to death. They do not rejoice that the time has come for the Christ to arrive.<sup>6</sup>

For Christians, Bethlehem has special meaning because Saint Gregory the Great, Pope and Confessor, one of the Four Great Western Doctors of the Church (540-603) says the name Bethlehem means the House of Bread.<sup>7</sup> As such, Bethlehem becomes the source of the Eucharistic bread of life and the mysterious and personal relationship with the Faithful.

The Faithful have a personal and mysterious relationship with Jesus Christ. Throughout the ages, Christians identify themselves with Isaiah the prophet. Psalm 72 extends the relationship with Christ to every nation on earth. Ephesians spells out the relationship as coheirs, members of the same body and copartners. The alleluia verse extends the meaning of the Messiah to the whole universe, including

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<sup>4</sup> Monday, December 13, 2004, 12:30 a.m. at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10255a.htm> The Catholic Encyclopedia.

<sup>5</sup> Monday, December 13, 2004, 12:31 a.m. at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/REALNICK.htm>, Symeon the Metaphrast, "the Real St. Nicholas, Selections from *The Life of Nicholas*.

<sup>6</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Developing Conflict between Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew's Gospel: a Literary-Critical Study," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 49, No. 1 (January 1987) 61, 65.

<sup>7</sup> IV. St. Gregory, Pope and Doctor, "On the Feast: Given to the People in the Basilica of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the day of the Nativity of Our Lord," PL 54, col. 216, Sermon 7. "Christmas Day: The Gospel of the Mass of the Aurora," in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 120.

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the stars, as the Gospel demonstrates that those who should have known the meaning, did not. The Faithful do.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.