

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Jan 8th 2017

Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. See darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the Lord shines, and over you appears his glory. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance (Isaiah 60:1-3).

The glory of the Lord shines from Jerusalem throughout all the earth! And so we Christians now participate with Israel in God's manifestation to the world through the child born of Mary!

Gentiles, non-Jews, are now co-heirs with the Jews of God's promises! No one was more shocked at this revelation than Paul himself. As a devout Jew – indeed as a Pharisee – Paul believed that God's manifestation throughout Hebrew scriptures was intended exclusively for the Jews. Paul was actually on a journey to Damascus to persecute Jesus' followers when Jesus appeared and revealed the startling truth.

It was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel (Eph 3:5-6).

And could there be a more dramatic illustration of the significance of Jesus' birth for all nations than the dramatic scene of the three kings from the east following the star to Bethlehem?

And behold, the star 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 (Mt 1:9-11).

Today's feast of the Epiphany is a manifestation both that Jesus is Lord and that Jesus is Lord not merely of the Jews but of all peoples! Jesus' Lordship occurs through the power of the Holy Spirit! And the Church formally teaches that the light of the Holy Spirit shines not only in Jewish and Christian hearts but in all people of good will. Vatican Council II in *The Church in the Modern World* put this truth simply and elegantly.

All this hold true not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose heart grace works in an unseen way. For, since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit, in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with the paschal mystery (#22).

Yes, authentic Christianity acknowledges the immanence of the divine in all people of good will in every culture. Let us celebrate God's epiphany to our troubled world! The responsorial psalm catches our joy: "Lord, every nation on earth will adore you."

Richard Hauser, S.J.-Creighton University's Emeritus Professor & Assistant to President for Mission