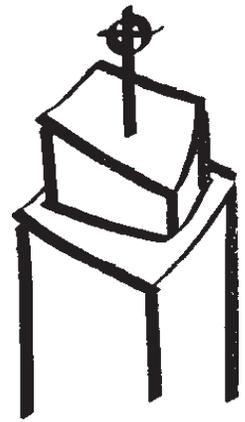


OUR FAMILY NEWS

For Oblates of St. Bede Abbey, Peru, Illinois



January &
February, 2019



I WILL MAKE YOU A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES

In the liturgy as in the New Testament, the mystery of Christ is always placed in relationship to the events of the Old Testament, which served as foreshadowings of what was to occur in the fullness of time. In the Roman liturgy, the centerpiece of the feast of the Epiphany is the arrival of the Magi, who are led by the guidance of a star to offer worship to the Christ Child. It was an ancient belief that a new star appeared at the time of a ruler's birth. But St. Matthew no doubt intends to relate the star to the prophecy of Balaam in the book of Numbers: *A star shall advance from Jacob, and a scepter advance out of Israel.* The story of the Magi thus becomes the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy.

In addition to this, the adoration of the Magi foreshadows the extension of the saving work of Jesus to the nations, a theme that was very dear to Matthew. Although his Gospel is in many ways the most Jewish of all, yet he is the only one of the evangelists to attribute to Jesus the words: *Many will come from the east and the west, and will recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the banquet in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom will be driven out into the outer darkness.* He also tells us that the risen Jesus' final directive to his disciples was, *Go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.* He sees the Magi as the earliest of those who flocked from the east to embrace the truth of the gospel, the first fruits of the Gentiles.

In the Old Testament it is clear that the descendants of Abraham have been specially chosen by God as the recipients of his blessing. They are the focus of almost all of the Old Testament books: it is their kings whose exploits are recounted, their prophets whose oracles are recorded, their priests who offer acceptable worship to God. All the other people in the world are grouped together as simply *the nations*, who do not know the true God and his revelation, so that their behavior is displeasing to God and their sacrifices are described as *abominations*. They are usually perceived as enemies and as wicked evildoers. There are only a few places in the Old Testament where they are seen in a more positive light by writers who have clearly done some thinking about God's attitude to all his creatures. The author of Jonah portrays them as repentant, and the narrow-minded Israelite prophet in his story is the one of whom God disapproves. Above all, it is the great poet of the second part of the book of Isaiah who provides a new perspective: Israel is indeed specially chosen, but not for her own sake; rather, it is her vocation to be *a light to the Gentiles*, to make the true God known to them so that eventually they also will come to acknowledge him and share in his salvation. Israel is meant to be an instrument in the hands of God, a light to enlighten all other peoples.

In one of the Masses of Christmas the Church sings: *This day a great light has come down upon the earth.* The glory of God shone around the shepherds and led them to the crib. In St. Luke's Gospel, Zechariah sings that *the daybreak from on high will visit us to shine on those who sit in darkness and death's shadow to guide our feet into the path of peace*, and later Simeon calls Jesus *a light of revelation to the Gentiles and glory for your people Israel.* The Incarnation—the manifestation of God himself in our human nature—is the light of God appearing in the darkness of the human condition on earth. It spread gradually in concentric circles, first upon Mary and Joseph, illumined by the Christ Child, then upon the shepherds who hastened to the scene to find the sign foretold to them and who thereupon spread the news to their neighbors. All of these recipients belong to the chosen people: they are that remnant of Israel of which the prophets spoke. But now, with the star of Bethlehem

visible from afar, the illumination of the nations has already begun. The vision that inspired Deutero-Isaiah has become a reality.

The appearance of God himself in our world and in our nature—his epiphany—is the beginning of the climax of human history. It will culminate in his passion, death, and resurrection. There was more than a simply practical reason why in the early Church it was on this day that bishops sent out what was called their festal letter, the first purpose of which was to announce the dates of the movable feasts for that year, especially the date of Easter. In the Child of Bethlehem, God revealed himself in that human form—the *form of a slave*—in which he would reach the depths of humiliation on the cross, in order to be exalted with the name that is above every name. The concealment of the divinity under the humble human appearances that characterize the entire earthly life of Jesus are the most eloquent manifestation of God. The epiphany to the Magi is not something external added to God's plan, but is a constitutive part of it. This episode in its simplicity reveals that *the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel*. The manifestation to all nations and welcoming them into the society of the redeemed is the fulfilment of the election of Israel. The Church is meant to encompass the fullness of humanity, reconciled in one body. The shepherds and the Magi belong together at the crib.

+ Fr. Claude Peifer, O.S.B.



Our Family News is published in the special interest of the oblates of St. Bede Abbey. Please send changes of address and comments to The Editor, Our Family News, St. Bede Abbey, 24 W US Highway 6, Peru, IL 61354.

We welcome your submissions to this publication, either instructive or reflective, whether prose or poetry. They should in some way relate to the **Rule of Benedict**, Benedictine spirituality, and/or the oblate program. The editor reserves the rights to choose material for publication and to edit as necessary.

SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING MEETINGS

Meetings are held in the abbey church from
1:30 P.M. to 4:30 P.M.

Sunday, January 13, 2019
Sunday, February 10, 2019
Sunday, March 10, 2019
Sunday, April 14, 2019
Sunday, May 5, 2019

Passage for *Lectio* at the January Meeting

Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 6:35-40

Passage for *Lectio* at the February Meeting

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Matthew 9:9-13



Abbey Prayer Schedule

Visitors are welcome to join the monks for Mass and for the hours of the Divine Office. Conventual Mass is celebrated on the first level of the abbey church, the hours of the Divine Office on the second level. The monks' schedule is as follows.

5:45 A.M. Morning Prayer*
7:45 A.M. Conventual Mass**
12:00 Noon Midday Prayer
5:30 P.M. Evening Prayer***
* on Sunday, 7:00 A.M.
** on Sunday, 10:00 A.M.
*** on Saturday & Sunday, 5:00 P.M.

