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### Encountering the Divine: Bishop Jung's Epiphany Message



*"When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."*

Matthew 2:10-11

Epiphany is a word that has lost much meaning in the church, though we do retain it in remembrance the first Sunday after Christmas as a commemoration of the visit of the magi to the infant King. But in its broadest and

purest sense, an epiphany is a magnificent manifestation of the divine. The early church referred to the revelation of Jesus to the magi – Gentile astrologers and wise scholars, not of the Jewish faith – as both an epiphany and a theophany (appearance of God to humans). Interestingly, Jesus' appearance before the shepherds was not considered epiphany, because in this context, he was the expected Messiah. This is another missing element of epiphany – unexpected as well as magnificent.

But expected or unexpected, do we in our day and age really anticipate encounters with the divine? Haven't we relegated epiphany to a quaint scene in our Christmas pageants (where, for some inexplicable reason we have the shepherds and the wise men arrive simultaneously, implying a confusing hybrid Matthew/Luke mash-up of holiday cheer!) where the gifts are given, and the wise men step back in ensemble adoration of baby Jesus with all the other players?

How far are we willing to travel to see Jesus? Some scholars believe that the magi travelled not just weeks, not just months, but years to find the Christ child. And here is the amazing thing: Jesus was not their Messiah, not their Savior, not their King – at least not in their belief system. He was to be the King of the Jews. Gentiles were on their own. But as Savior, he came to rescue the entire created order of God!

In this remarkable case, certain men of magic, astrology, prediction, and prognostication saw signs and portents that the world was soon to change, completely and irrevocably. King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Prince of Peace, Savior of all humankind – something that had never happened before was happening now, in the immediate and present world. Those who saw Jesus saw God – epiphany, theophany, Emmanuel.

I know it is challenging but think if you had never heard this story before. God, on earth. The divine, in human form. Wise men from the east left whatever home, family, security, and comfort they knew to seek the Messiah of a foreign faith. It makes no sense. But, ultimately, it made all the sense in the world.

When you next attend church, prepare to have an epiphany. Prepare your heart, mind, and spirit to meet the new born king; to encounter the divine. Ready yourself to see God – God in the sanctuary, God in the prayers, God in the music, God in the scripture, God in your sisters and brothers. Prepare to be surprised; ready yourself for the unexpected; seek and you shall find! God is with us! God's Son is born anew, for us and for all, Savior of the world. Receive this sacred gift with joy.

Then, take what you receive with you and share it with everyone you meet. Multiply your blessing by giving it away. Surprise others with the love, joy, grace, and hope of Christ. Don't just have an epiphany but be the epiphany God calls you to be when Christ is born in your heart. O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Grace and Peace,