

Epiphany

3 1 10

O God

who by the leading of a star

manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth:

mercifully grant that we,

who know you now by faith

may at last behold your glory face-to-face.

My text may be found in Matthew chapter 2 and verse 2:

‘For we observed his star at its rising’

Three years ago, I was preparing to leave Potters Bar to come and live here in Dinard as your priest. It has been a good three years but inevitably there are some things I miss. For example, I do miss seeing English films when they are first released: the cinema here in Dinard isn't bad: each October, there is the British Film Festival but inevitably for some films I have to wait. One such film I'd like to see which went on general release on Boxing Day is called 'Nowhere Boy' – a biopic of John Lennon before he became famous. I guess for many of us 'The Beatles' were the sound of the sixties and I am personally curious to see the influences that contributed to make this extraordinary musical talent. Later, when the Beatles were into spirituality, they travelled to India to meet, to talk to and to be with the Maharishi Yogi and their interest in Transcendental Meditation had a great effect on their music and their fans. Interestingly, at the time, Radio 4's

'Thought for the Day' made this interesting observation: that it was not necessary to travel round the world in search of God: he was already here with us, closer to us than we could imagine.

One unique feature of St Bartholomew's is the star above our chancel. I'm not sure when it was first installed but I believe Elizabeth Hannay remembered it with affection from her childhood here. The five-pointed star, made up of 10 bulbs, symbolises the star which the wise men, the Magi, saw in the east and which alerted them to a significant birth. The wise men followed the star, travelling westwards until they arrived in Jerusalem and were pointed on to Bethlehem by Herod where they found the infant Jesus and bestowed on him their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Whatever you think of the star, whether it was indeed Halley's Comet, the star was a sign which the Magi were able to interpret; they could understand that the heavens were telling of the coming glory of God.

It is true that the three wise men, if indeed there were three of them (Matthew only tells us there were three gifts), did leave their homes in the east on a journey of discovery. It is true that they travelled to find what was being shown them. But the interesting fact is that God revealed himself to them where they were – they did not have to travel to hear him speak to them, they heard him through what they saw with their own eyes. God made himself manifest to these men where they were and in a way they could understand.

Epiphany is all about the manifestation of God to Man. In this instance, it is through non-Jews, Gentile astrologers, astronomers who studied the stars and

appreciated their meaning. What I find encouraging is not only is the manifestation of God intended for all people, not just his Chosen People, the Jews, but that God manifests himself to us where we are.

There is, then, no excuse for not coming to see God because he is already here with us now. All we have to do is open our eyes and our ears to catch glimpses of him in our lives. Fact is we don't have to travel to France or to the foothills of the Himalayas to find God because God is by definition everywhere. May we all, then, find and recognise God where we are today.

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's Dinard

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H: Sermon 21: Epiphany

