

## **Fr. John's Homily for Epiphany, 01-02-22**

I suppose it's been going on since the beginning. I'm talking about the secularization of our faith. It's all part of the spiritual battle; Satan, working through people, just like you and me, conspires to suppress the spiritual, the transcendent, while at the same time promoting the rational. The idea that the only truth comes from reason and that science is the road to all truth. That there are no miracles. He's been very successful.

But let me give you some examples. Some are very timely to this Christmas season that we are in. Take for instance the season's greeting, 'Merry Xmas'. Now I've never seen this on a Hallmark Card, and I've never actually heard someone say it, but I know that there are people who sign their Christmas cards in this way. I had an aunt who did that. And I remember, as a little kid, asking my mom dad, 'Why does she do that? Why does she put an X in place of Christ?' They simply shrugged.

Or how about the greeting, Happy Holidays? Back in the old days it was 'Holy days' – Christmas, followed quickly, in the Octave, by the Feast of Steven, then St. John, the Holy Innocents, the Holy Family, Mary, Mother of God, today's Epiphany, and then, the final feast of the Baptism of Jesus. The 12 Holy days of Christmas.

And what about Thanksgiving? The implication is that you're giving thanks to someone, namely God, but there are those who would simply call it "Turkey Day". O puleeese! And then there is, of course, All Hallows Eve, also known as the day before All Saints Day. So what is it now? Halloween. And there's no mention of any saints, just witches and goblins and monsters. Yes indeed, Satan has found a lot of willing helpers in his campaign to secularize our world.

The word 'epiphany' also has a secular meaning as well as a religious meaning. Have you ever heard a person say, "Ah, I've had an epiphany?" It's an indication of a new and sudden insight or a revelation. "the scales have fallen from my eyes. I can see clearly now. I've seen the light." We would like to presume that this kind of epiphany would be a positive and life-changing event. But it is not always the case. The Christmas morning Gospel, from St. John spoke of Jesus as the light coming into the world, but he lamented that 'the world preferred darkness'. I wonder if that's still the case. (Is it the case for us?)

Well, for our purposes today we will talk about the spiritual meaning of Epiphany. As a matter of fact if you go to the dictionary, or ask Siri, it will tell you immediately that it is a feast day in the Christian Church and that the word itself means "a manifestation" - a revealing of God to the Gentiles. And, of course, we are the Gentiles because everybody who is not a Jew is a gentile. So the wise men represented us. And the event served as an invitation to everyone to come to God's table.

As we reflect back on the Christmas readings, the very first manifestation was to the Jews, and interestingly, the representatives of the Jews were the very lowest of the low,

the shepherds, abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. Again, the mysterious Will of God, manifesting itself to us in unexpected ways. Kings born in cold stables, wrapped in swaddling clothes, greeted by the nobodies of this world who became the first evangelists.

But today, it's those Magi from the east who now have their day in the sun; or should we say in the starlight. Yes, Matthew tells their story and speaks of that mysterious star that rises in the east and beckons the wise men to follow it, westward, into Palestine, moving over to that little town of Bethlehem. Were they familiar with the sacred Scriptures of the Jewish people? Did they know of the prophecy? Or was it a movement of the spirit within each of their hearts?

Now, tradition says there were three wise men because of the three gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And in my homily on Christmas, according to that book, *The Mystical City of God*, I mentioned that the star was not an astronomical thing, like the conjunction planets, but that it was actually a miraculous star. And I used the term "UAP" which is the new version of UFO. It means Unexplained Aerial Phenomenon.

You might recall my homily from several months back when I spoke of a renewed interest in this UFO, UAP stuff when some military pilots reported seeing one of those "things" doing some impossible maneuvers and it was all caught on their cameras. The one I remember was when one of those UAP's flew directly into the water without so much as a splash. Now I am no physicist, but any physical object you would think would leave a big splash. So my speculation was that it was not a physical or material object, but a spiritual one. A good one, or a bad one. Remember the warning of St. Paul, "Beware of demons disguised as angels of light", or UFOs or UAPs.

So bearing all of that in mind. the Star of Bethlehem could indeed have been a spiritual event. A sign, from heaven, pointing in a direction, for a specific purpose. Namely, to lead three Magi to their destination. But again, what I find unusual is that nobody seems willing to put forth this hypothesis. Everything else we talk about at Christmas is transcendent, supernatural, spiritual, and miraculous in nature, so why not the star itself?

This past week, late Tuesday evening, after praying the rosary with Mother Angelica and the ladies on EWTN, I stuck around for the next show. It was one that I had seen many years ago. *Marian Apparitions of the 20th Century* narrated by Ricardo Montalban. It started with Fatima in 1917, and ended with Medjugorje. But there was one apparition that really stood out for me. Not too many people are familiar with it. It occurred in 1968, Zietun, a suburb of Cairo in Egypt. For over two years, the Mother of God, appeared as UAP, an Unexplained Aerial Phenomenon. She was seen walking around on the top of a church named after her, St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church. Millions of people witnessed this visual private revelation. She spoke no words.

There were no messages. But people came from many different backgrounds, Christians, Jews, Muslims. Atheists. There were healings and many conversions. And to top it off, the Blessed Mother brought her own private collection of UFOs, UAPs. They were doves that appeared with her, and they performed some incredible maneuvers. All caught on camera. You can watch this show on YouTube and decide for yourself regarding the question of secular versus miraculous.

The star is all about light. It represents Jesus. The light which came into the world. Let's pray for that light in this coming year so that if need be, we may come to our own epiphany and be able to say, "Aha, the scales have fallen from my eyes and that I can see clearly now." Furthermore, let us all resolve to reclaim what has been taken from us, that sense of the spiritual, the transcendent, the supernatural, and the miraculous. And let's not hesitate to share this good news with those who still prefer..... to live in darkness.

~Fr. John