

Epiphany 06, 09

1. Have you ever had a revelation? I mean, have you ever discovered something totally new about yourself or about someone or something else? Usually when we use the word revelation, we are thinking in a religious context. But the word can be applied to other situations as well. When we discover who the murderer is at the end of a good detective story, that is a revelation. When scientists make a breakthrough in the discovery of a new cure for a disease, that is a revelation. When we discover that we can do something which we always thought we couldn't do, that is a revelation. In short, a discovery, no matter in what area of our lives, always has the character of a revelation. And in all these cases we learn and are changed, sometimes radically. In positive revelations a larger life is given to us; in negative revelations our lives are diminished. The death of a loved one is revealed to us, and our lives are diminished. The love of another for us is revealed to us and our lives become larger. And since revelation is a discovery, it also has the character of something new.

2. But for us who are religious, the word revelation usually has a religious meaning. Thus in ch. 3:2 of John's First Letter we read these beautiful words: "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is

revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” Here we have an example of a positive revelation in which our lives are enlarged. Indeed, there cannot be any enlargement greater than the one promised here, that we will be like God himself because we will see him. Evidently John believes that the very fact that we will see God will change us. We will become what we see.

3. In last Sunday’s readings we read from Paul’s Letter to the Galatians. There Paul told us that Jesus has made us his brothers and sisters by sending his spirit, the holy spirit, into our hearts crying Abba, the word Jesus himself used in his prayers to God. That too is a revelation, and of the most positive kind, and it differs from John’s revelation only in the sense that it pertains to this life while John is talking about heavenly future.

4. But these revelations of our Christian faith won’t become real revelations for us unless we begin to see ourselves as they describe us, as the sisters and brothers of Jesus, as those who are already part of the divine family and as those who will undergo a final transformation, indeed, a divinization when we see God face to face. So we pray that this may happen to us. And prayer is what will make it happen. So let us pray for this revelation.

5. When we begin to think of ourselves in this new way, even more so, when we begin to experience ourselves in this new way, our thoughts and our feelings are going to change in many ways. In my opinion, one way in which they will change is that we will begin to understand and even feel that we are one with every other human being, no matter how different this person may be from us. For in the light of these revelations we are going to realize that every person is the brother and sister of Jesus and the child of God, just as we are, and is destined for a divine transformation. Thus the barriers by which we exclude others from our care and consideration will begin to collapse. Maybe not all at once, maybe very slowly, but eventually they will be broken down.

6. And that is what today's readings for this feast of the epiphany are telling us. The story of the magi or three kings wants to teach us that these foreigners from far away lands are one with us in their adoration of the child Jesus. And in the second reading Paul tells the Ephesians that God has now revealed something that was kept secret until his time, namely, that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. These words do not mean much for us today, but for the early church they were an absolute revelation. Jews could not imagine that Gentiles could be just as much God's

people as they were, but that has now been revealed to him and the other Christians, Paul says.

7. Fifty years ago in this country we began to unpack our racial prejudices. We are still in process with that issue. But what do you think our current blockages are? Whom do we exclude from the love of God? In what area of our lives, with what groups of people do we need to be taught that God's judgment does not agree with ours? Where do we need of revelation? In my opinion, we need much revelation when it comes to the areas of war and of economic justice. Both as individuals and as a community we stand in need of revelations in these concrete questions of our day. So let us ask the Lord for them both for ourselves as individuals and for ourselves as a community, as the church. We need a star which will direct us to the crib.