



IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD. AMEN.

My Beloved, Priests, Deacons, Servants, Members of Church Committees, and all the Congregation, my sincerest congratulations to you all for this Glorious Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ and the mystery of His Incarnation.

Of this day, St. John Chrysostom, in his homily "On the Saviour's Birth" says,

"But what can I say? For the wonder astounds me. The Ancient of Days Who sits upon a high and exalted throne is laid in a manger."

And St. Isaac the Syrian says,

"Today the Divine Being took upon Himself the seal of our humanity, in order for humanity to be decorated by the seal of Divinity."

Truly, tonight we rejoice and celebrate at this great feast.

As we just heard the gospel reading of that first Christmas night, there are many characters that we see and meditate upon.

We see Virgin Mary, the holy Mother of Light, and the sacrifice she made to accept her calling to bear the Son of God in her womb. The beauty of her faith inspires us all.

We see the righteous St. Joseph and the way he courageously obeyed God, serving as the Lord's father on earth and protecting Him from danger from His earliest days.

We see also the shepherds, and the wise men, and the innkeeper, and even Herod as we read about that first Christmas night.

But there's one element of the story that we seldom discuss or meditate upon – a part of the story that plays a pivotal role in the gospel which we just read. The star. The star of Bethlehem or the Christmas star, that was divinely sent to lead the wise men to Christ.

**Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."
(Matthew 2:1-2)**

To be sure, this was not an ordinary star. It was a miraculous star – a divine messenger sent by God to lead the wise men to the Child Jesus. This amazing star that was seen by no one other than these wise men and as they followed it, they drew nearer and nearer to God and to the revelation of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the same way, my beloved, God sends us "stars" all the time – divine signs that guide us and draw us nearer to Him so that He can reveal Himself to us in new ways. And like the star of Bethlehem, our star might be unnoticeable to others. But for the one to whom the star was sent, it is a divine messenger that draws us nearer to God.

It could be a sermon we hear at church or online. A message God is sending to us in a particular circumstance or at just the right time in my life.

It could be a word we hear from a priest in Confession – something that seems to be out of the blue but is directly sent to us by God.



It could be an unassuming interaction with a colleague, or an unsolicited email from a friend, or an unexpected call from a family member. Something that comes at just the right time that we needed to hear it.

And, unfortunately, it could also be a trial or affliction or hardship; something painful that God allows to come into our lives for the ultimate purpose of bringing us closer to Him.

The point is that just as He did with the wise men God is always working to draw us nearer to Him and to reveal Himself to us. Regardless of what our enemy, the devil, may lead us to believe, God is love and no matter how far we may feel from Him, He is always working and sending us stars to draw us nearer and nearer to Him.

As it is written by the prophet Isaiah,

“It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer.” (Isaiah 65:24)

That's what He did with the wise men. He revealed to them that which they didn't even know they were looking for.

They were foreigners. Pagans. Unbelievers. Gentiles from a faraway land. Yet despite their seeming unworthiness, God sent them a star. He worked in their lives to draw them near. Even though they were not of the children of Israel, they were still of the children of God and His desire is to bring all His children – including you and me – close to Him.

Because no matter how far one may be, we are never so far that God doesn't reach out His hand and send us a star to draw us nearer to Him.

And ultimately my brethren, that is what Christmas is all about. It's about God refusing to allow you and I to be far away. It's about Him coming down from heaven so He that could be close to us and unite us with Himself. It's about God drawing near to man so that man could draw near to God.

As we pray during the Midnight Psalmody,

“For You do not desire the death of a sinner, but rather that He returns and that his soul may live.” Conclusion of Adam Theotokia

My beloved, no matter how much we desire God, never doubt that His desire for us is greater. He desires to be found by you even more than you desire to find Him. Let me repeat that: **God desires to be found by you, even more than you desire to find Him.**

That was the case with the wise men – even though they were pagans – and that certainly is the case with you and I as well. God wants to be found by you even more than you want to find Him.

And so just as He did for the magi, I pray God would send a star into your life to help you on your journey. And when He does, I pray that we would have the wisdom and the patience to follow that star, no matter how difficult the journey might be.

Because when we do, the end result will always be the same. The star always leads us to Christ and Christ leads us to great joy.



“Behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him.” (Matthew 2:9-11)

May God bless you all and may He fill your lives with His Divine Presence in the coming year. May He open all of our eyes to see the stars He is sending. And may He never allow us to be like Herod and the Jewish leaders who – despite being only a few miles from manger where the Virgin gave birth – refused to acknowledge and follow the same star that would have led them to Christ.

May God never allow us to ignore that which He is sending into our lives.

Through the intercessions of the pure Virgin, Mother of God and Mother of Light, St. Mary, and through the prayers of the blessed elder, St. Joseph the carpenter, and through the prayers of our holy Father and Shepherd, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, merry Christmas to you all.

Bishop Peter

Bishop, Diocese of North, South Carolina & Kentucky
And Papal Vicar of the Churches of Virginia

