

**Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.
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You know, my ministry to the men and women of the Armed Forces, the patients in VA Hospitals, and their families obliges me to travel constantly. A portion of the Christmas Season always finds me far away. One advantage is that on my return I can take my time with the Christmas cards that have arrived. Particularly precious are the photographs that my nieces and nephews and families from my first parochial assignment send. I can see how much their children and grandchildren have grown. Those are concrete signs of progress and milestones on the journey of life.

The Solemnity of the Epiphany obliges us to consider our participation in the journey or pilgrimage of faith, to evaluate our gifts and their use, and to recognize that the call to holiness, so well depicted in a dome of this basilica, is for all.

The passage from the prophet Isaiah was written for those returning from the arduous experience of the exile in Babylon. The notion of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, however, takes on a new dimension. There are two caravans. One is filled with the Chosen People who return home from exile. The second is filled with the gentiles, foreigners, who are attracted by the light of the Holy City. There is a notion of unity and universality, which prepares the way for the arrival of the Messiah as the Savior of the world.

However, you cannot leave on a pilgrimage to light without being willing to depart. You cannot journey if you are not disposed to leave behind what is comfortable, because it is familiar. Humanity is called to leave behind its pessimism and its individualism to embrace new life. The new Jerusalem to which we all journey can be reached only by leaving behind the shadows and moving toward the luminous city.

Jerusalem is the symbol of the grand manifestation of the divine plan and the revelation of whatever is hidden. The Magi, the illustrious first fruits of the non-Jewish world found the Child, as I mentioned, because they had set out. They were open to the presence of God and His call to an ever deeper experience of His will. That openness is

shown again by their willingness to return home by a different route. They were not so hidebound in their ideas that they remained blinded to the call of Almighty God, ever new.

We cannot fail to notice that on their way to the Child they stop in Jerusalem to take counsel. They are willing to seek direction. They acknowledge that they do not have all of the answers. Theirs is not a ready-made program, packaged for a few strokes on the computer, but rather a dynamic relationship with the loving God who calls them to the fullness of His life. The contrast with Herod and his court could not be more obvious. Their fear and jealousy have closed the door to any experience of the wonderful generosity of the Lord.

The Magi, as the first hearers and witnesses of the Christ, are the forerunners and a prototype of the authentic adorers who will be the harvest of the messianic era. Jesus is the sower who has brought the good seed of the Word for all, the Spirit has helped it mature, and the Church is invited to harvest the abundant fruit sowed by His Revelation and made fruitful by His death.¹

Considering the journey of the Wise Men and mindful that we begin today National Migration Week, Cardinal DiNardo and Archbishop Gómez have reminded us that “Migration is, more than anything, an act of great hope. Our brothers and sisters who are forced to migrate suffer devastating family separation and most often face dire economic conditions to the point they cannot maintain a very basic level of living. Refugees flee their countries due to war and persecution which inspires them to risk everything for an opportunity to live in peace.”²

I know that my grandparents left Northern Italy at the end of the XIX Century in the search for a better life. Men, women, and children still search for that today. Let us never forget that the Christ Child was obliged to flee, His banner will be the cross, He is a sign of contradiction. We cannot forsake that role, despite the pressure of modern secularism, the dictatorship of relativism, or the temptation to indifference. Bethlehem becomes the new Zion, the universal city of all peoples.

The Wise Men came with gifts: Gold to the king, incense to God, and myrrh to man. Their generosity gave us our practice of exchanging gifts at this time of year. However, you and I know that all gifts have their origin in Almighty God. He is ultimately the Author of whatever we have. Our gifts, when properly used, further our journey to life without end. They also facilitate the journey of others.

Paul is very conscious of his commission to bring the Gospel to all people. His radical conversion is gift to the Church of all times. From his experience we learn to use gifts and talents to bring the experience of Jesus Christ to the periphery, as Pope Francis urges us continually.

¹ Cfr. Zevini and Cabra, *Lectio Divina*, 2, p. 161.

² Daniel Di Nardo and José Gómez, 6 January statement.

With the Psalmist we know: “For He shall rescue the poor when he cries out, and the afflicted when he has no one to help him. He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor; the lives of the poor He shall save.”

For the Church in Europe this Solemnity was always an occasion to support the missions in recognition of the universality of the call to believe in Christ. From the Nunciature in the Ivory Coast where I was first assigned, we would distribute the generosity of the Epiphany Collection in favor of numerous works to support the education and nourishment of children in West Africa.

Paul writes to the Church at Ephesus regarding the universal call to the Gospel. The call to holiness in Jesus Christ goes beyond the boundaries of ethnic origins or other limitations. The vocation to evangelize is common to us all.

The instrument of this vision of universality is the Church, which must create links of communion and fraternity, despite the appearances and divergence. The charge is to proclaim that God is communion and we are called to participate in the Trinitarian community. Communion with the Lord Jesus leads to communion with all people. He has made reality this call to unity.

From my vantage point in this vast basilica, I can see that the word has gone forth and has been embraced by many peoples. The Church is composed of the nations. Now the task is to make sure that the Gospel message is rooted in our hearts.

From the intimacy of Christ and the Church is born the mission of the disciples, which is, among other things, to create unity between people, languages, and races. It is the Word that creates unity between believers of all times. We can gather, because we share the same belief that inspired our ancestors, or because the Lord has called us to Himself—like the Magi of old. In any event, we have been baptized and nourished in that faith.

Indeed, I can tell you something about travel and holidays far from home. However, mine is not a lament, but an invitation to be open like the Kings from the East so as to cultivate the interior disposition necessary to perceive the morning star and to be attentive so as to hear the Lord’s invitation to journey with Him

Only then can we adore the Lord.