

# + EPIPHANY

January 6, 2025

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Philip Anderson, Abbot of Clear Creek Abbey

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*All they from Saba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense, and showing forth praise. (Isaiah 60)*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,  
My very Dear Sons,

The Epiphany is a feast of attraction: the Incarnate Word irradiates the world, and the humble of heart are attracted to the spiritual light emanating from the Stable of Bethlehem. At the same time the tiny Messiah is more or less ignored by the world of men, except by King Herod, who perceives a possible threat to his power. This attraction is on a very grand scale, bringing the Magi from great distances, but it is selective at the beginning, as only a handful of souls benefit from this new radiance that has shined forth upon the earth. Nevertheless, this attraction will grow in intensity and extension over time. It begins as a tiny point of light in the darkness, symbolized by the wonderful and wandering star that leads the three kings from the East, but it is destined to grow into a glorious sunshine in the end, the sun of justice for all men, vanquishing all other light. All commences at the moment of the winter solstice, when the night is at its longest; all ends at the vanishing point of time, in the noonday brightness of eternity, in the Kingdom of light and love that vanquishes temporal kingdoms and all the bastions of darkness.

Once He becomes an adult, the Lord continues to attract souls to Himself, especially with His words and His miracles. The wedding feast of Cana is a singular moment of this story of Divine attraction, when, at His Mother's bidding, Christ turns water into wine and manifests Himself as Messiah. At His Baptism, Jesus is revealed and made manifest again, this time with a "theophany" or manifestation of the one true God in Three Persons: the Holy Spirit descends upon Him in the form of a dove, while the Father declares Him to be His "beloved Son, in whom [He] is well pleased" (Mt. 3:16-17). And yet, even then, most of the world continues to despise and willfully ignore this prophet from Nazareth. In the end, after having accomplished the most astounding miracles, having "gone about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:38), the Lord is put to death by the malice of those who "loved darkness rather than light: for their works were evil" (Jn. 3:19).

In our time, it is impossible to count those who are daily attracted to the life-giving light of the Messiah. Numberless Christians and people of other religious persuasion visit His tomb in Jerusalem and the city of His birth, even as the political situation in the Mideast remains troubled. No other religious leader in the world even approaches the prestige enjoyed by the Catholic Pope in Rome, not to mention numerous personalities of other Christian denominations. The Epiphany of Christ only increases every day. And yet, the "mystery of iniquity," as St. Paul

calls it (II Thess. 2), is hard at work blocking this wonderful light of God, obscuring all things—even the most basic facts of Natural Law once held by all honest men. Greed and unleashed sensuality exercise a devastating power over our societies. To countless human beings, all over the globe now, hypnotized literally by the magic of the mass media in what has truly become an “entertainment culture,” God appears as a foreign being and nearly forgotten throw-back to another age. More than a third of Americans consider themselves now to be “post-Christians.” It seems that within the lifetime of young people today God may well be banished altogether from public life, if not entirely from the heart of man.

Of course, Our Lord told us this would happen. “But yet the Son of man, when He cometh, shall He find, think you, faith on earth?” (Lk. 18:8) It all leads up to the Second Coming of Christ, when He is to judge the living and the dead.

In the end, there simply is no way to vanquish the light of God. What is a shadow after all? Is it really something? Is it not, rather, the absence of light? What is sin? Surely it is not simply absence: it is a real privation of a good that ought to be. But it is all the same a reality that lacks being, lacks substance. The good, the true, the beautiful refer to what really *is*. Evil has no real consistency in itself. In the end the light will triumph and the shadows will flee, and all of this, really, without effort on the part of God, even though the saving of mankind will cost Christ His life.

May the beautiful spectacle, the incomparable vision of this Child ruling in love the universe from His bed of straw, draw our hearts ever more to the light that He is, attracting us and all around us by virtue of the light and beauty of what truly matters, of what truly counts. We will be ever blessed for this, despite the darkness in the world. We will always find this Epiphany of Light shining for us, even in our darkest moments, from the royal throne of a Virgin’s lap, from arms of the Mother of God. Amen. Alleluia.