



Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord January 7 2024

Reflection Mgr Daniel McHugh

“O Star of Wonder” (From ‘We Three Kings’)

“We saw His star in the East and have come to do him homage” (Mt 2:2)

This week I was very pleased to see this beautiful inspirational prayer for the New Year posted on the Internet:

“Help me to journey beyond the familiar and into the unknown.

Give me the faith to leave old ways and break fresh ground with You.

Christ of the Mysteries, I trust you to be stronger than each storm within me.

I will trust in the darkness and know that my times, even now, are in Your hand.

Tune my spirit to the music of Heaven, and somehow, make my obedience count for You.”

It is a prayer from St Brendan the Navigator; a famous Saint whose birth was in Tralee (484) Co. Kerry and who died in Annaghdown in Galway in 560. His remains are at the Church of Ireland, Clonfert Cathedral. This extraordinary Saint was in the news not so long ago when it was claimed he was the first to discover America, well before Columbus. Doubt had been expressed about this, but extensive research by an explorer Tim Severin in the 1970’s showed that it had been entirely possible using the coracle boats of the time. Brendan, like so many Irish Celtic Saints was fired by the light of Christ in their lives and set out to share that light with others: it was not to be kept to themselves in a selfish way.

The people of Israel were very aware that they were God’s ‘elect’, His chosen people, and in this celebration of the Epiphany (meaning manifestation) they were reminded in the excerpt from The Letter to the Ephesians for the Feast that *“the gentiles/pagans now share the same inheritance, that they are parts of the same body, and that the same promise has been made to them, in Christ Jesus, through the Gospel.”* The missionary monks, like Brendan, dedicated their lives to sharing the light of Christ – if it had shone in their lives, they had to let it shine for others. Brendan founded a number of monasteries: his first voyage took him to the Arran Islands where he founded a monastery. He also visited Hinba (Argyll), an island off the Scottish Coast, where he is said to have met Columcille. On the same voyage he travelled to Wales, and finally to Brittany, on the Northern coast of France, though he is best known for his famous seven year voyage across the Atlantic Ocean with sixteen monks.

I have been following occasionally a series of Reflections recently posted by the Church of England. For the Gospel reading about the Wise Men who followed the Star this

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



question is raised under “O Star of Wonder” (from the well-known Hymn “We Three Kings”):

“What fills you with wonder? What would make you ready to leave security and familiarity behind in order to discover your true meaning?”

Everyone lived under that star – but only the Magi followed it and had their eyes opened.

In the Year of Prayer 2024 preparing for the Holy Year of 2025 let us consider turning to the prayer of St Brendan, I quoted at the beginning, and make it our own, especially those words *“Tune my spirit to the music of Heaven”*. That music is to be found especially in the words of the Prophet Isaiah for the Solemnity of the Epiphany:

“Arise, shine out, for your light has come, the glory of the Lord, is rising on you, though night still covers the earth and darkness the peoples”.

The light of the star shines on the child enthroned on Mary’s lap. The Wise Men *“prostrated themselves and did Him homage”*. Let us join them there. Father Ferlita says in his commentary “The Paths of Life”: *“Christ, remember, is the Light from Light: so must we be, our light from His Light, replicating as best we can the epiphany of God’s love in the world”*.

With St Brendan we pray his wonderful words:

“Help me to journey beyond the familiar and into the unknown.” Amen

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