

From the very beginning, Christianity has been practiced openly, clearly, and in full view of the rest of the world. The rest of the world should never have to guess what Christians stand for, what their faith is all about. There is something essential about Christianity which can only be described with the word we use today to name the Feast and that is Epiphany. Epiphany means to lay open, to make obvious, to show, to set in the light.

The story of the Magi is the one we usually associate with the Epiphany. The Wise Men are eloquent representatives of a humanity hungry for the truth. This Epiphany, this revelation- Christ can satisfy our deepest need to know the truth. He doesn't hide Himself or what He has to offer. His message, His life, is open to the best, the most skillful, critical examination society can produce. Perhaps the strongest and most unsettling point in this Gospel is made in the fact that these Wise Men are foreigners. This underlies a truth that Christ has revealed from the beginning but one which even the strongest of believers sometimes have difficulty accepting- Christ lays Himself open to everyone. And there is another strong Revelation in the Magi story and that is the figure of Herod. In the story, Herod is humankind at its worst. Herod is the part of us that not only shrinks back in our pursuit of the Truth but even erects barriers in the path of others. That part of us that dims and covers over the clear visibility of the Christian message and witness. Any time any of us say or do anything that makes it more difficult for those who see us to recognize and understand the message of Christ, then we are playing out Herod's role. Any time we do nothing, any time we fail to contribute to the clear visibility of Christianity, we are playing out Herod's role.

Christianity is a Revelation, a way of life, that speaks openly, honestly to the deepest of human fears and doubts and questions and needs. And it does so with equal intensity to everyone, every age, every situation. Our lives, what we say, what we do, what we are, must now be the star of Epiphany.