

Friday Prayers - 19  
8.1.68

Back: Christmas Oratorio A. 59

Beside thy cradle, see I stand, Child Jesus Lord of  
Heaven  
The gifts I offer in my hand Are by thy bounty given.  
O take with them my mind & heart,  
my soul, my strength, my every part,  
and be it in Thy right pleasing.

The Magi who, following their star, came to look for  
a new-born King to offer Him their gifts & homage, found  
a small child in a poor dwelling-place. They found him  
with Mary his mother, and somehow, they recognized in His  
ordinary circumstance, the King they'd been looking for. The  
gifts they offered were princely - their use for the Christ-  
child, symbolic only: tho' one wonders what Mary & Joseph  
must have done with all those unaccustomed riches. But  
the important thing about these Wise Men wasn't who they were  
or what they brought, but the fact that these strangers came,  
recognized and worshipped - and why they did so.

For most of us, and certainly for commercial interests  
(the decorations have all gone now from Central District),  
Christmas vaguely peter out around the beginning of the New  
Year. But this isn't the end of the Christmas mystery for the

Church in her celebration of it. Epiphany is just as important,  
and in ways, more important a celebration than the 25<sup>th</sup> Dec.  
The Christmas cycle doesn't really end till the 2<sup>nd</sup> Febr. For  
the Eastern Church - the Orthodox, Epiphany is the feast of  
Christmas. It's the manifestation, the revelation to the world  
of God's love, who has sent His son to be born into and  
live our human situation in order to redeem it & make it  
holy for us. The Magi, wherever they were, represent all of  
mankind, invited by the Light of Christ, to come, find &  
recognize him who is God-among-us. When we've found him,  
it's ourselves we've got to offer & give Him, in adoration and  
service. Epiphany is the revelation of Christ to us, known  
not only by the visit of the Magi, but in what happened one  
day on the Jordan river when the heavens were opened and  
a voice was heard: This is my beloved Son - In what  
happened another day in the village of Cana when water was  
suddenly transformed into wine by the power of His Son  
whose birth we've been celebrating - the first sign he worked,  
which led his disciples to believe in Him. It is the same  
revelation made to us when water was poured over our heads  
in the sign which is Baptism; when in the Eucharist, we  
receive that sign which is bread ~~was~~ changed into the body  
of that same Christ who was born & lived in Palestine.

The Magi found him with his mother — in a family.  
 We call it the Holy Family; but it was a family like almost  
 any other, when work had to be done, meals got ready;  
 when there was worry, anxiety & anguish when they had to  
 become refugees in Egypt, when the child was lost for three days  
 in Jerusalem. But as then, so now we must search for,  
 find and recognize Christ & who is he — we'll find him, as  
 He's told us himself, in other people who need us, who are our  
 brother. We'll find him in a family — and here on it may  
 sometimes seem, ~~that~~ he can be recognized, indeed must  
 be recognized in our own family, in our husbands & wives and  
 the children whose lives, like Christ's to Mary & Joseph, have been  
 entrusted to our care.

Before our formal prayers today, let's listen meditatively to  
 an <sup>old</sup> Italian version of the Magi's visit: Q.

PRAYERS

I leave you today with music from an oratorio on Christ's childhood  
 — this is the prelude to the Flight into Egypt.

Laudamus

Berlioz  
 L'enfance  
 du Christ