

“Then they opened their treasures & offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, there was a newly married, young couple named Jim and Della. They were very poor ...and they were very much in love.

As Christmas approached, Della wondered what to get for Jim. She decided to get him a watch-chain for his gold watch, **BUT**—and there’s that proverbial **BUT** already, she just didn’t have enough money. Then, she got an idea. She had long, beautiful, blonde hair. She decided to cut off her hair and sell it ...to buy the watch-chain for Jim with the money.

So, now it’s Christmas Eve. Della is returning home. In her hand is a beautiful box, containing a gold plated chain, which she has purchased with selling her hair. Suddenly, Della begins to worry. She knows Jim admires her long hair, and she wonders if he will be disappointed that she cut it off and sold it. With her stomach in a knot, she knows only time will tell.

Della climbs the final flight of stairs leading to their tiny apartment. She unlocks the door and finds Jim waiting. In his hand is a neatly wrapped box, containing his gift for her.

When Jim sees Della’s short hair, tears begin to form in his eyes. **But** ...he says nothing. He chokes back the tears and gives Della his gift.

When Della opens it, she can’t believe what she sees. There, in the box, is a set of beautiful, mother of pearl-handled combs for her long hair.

And when Jim opens her gift, he too, can hardly believe his eyes. There, inside the box, is a beautiful chain for his gold watch. Only then, does Della realize that Jim sold his gold watch to buy the combs for her once ...long ...beautiful hair. And Jim realizes what Della did to buy his gift.

Some people think this whole thing has ended in tragedy. However, I think it is beautiful. The key to its beauty is, **not** the gifts they bought for one another, but the **love** the gifts symbolize!



And that brings me to today’s celebration of the Feast of the Epiphany, also called the Feast of the Magi/3 Kings. But, **“what was my purpose in telling you the story of Jim & Della?”** you ask.

Well, I am glad you asked that question.

It has to do with ‘gifts.’ Just as the gifts between Jim & Dela had great symbolism, i.e., depth in meaning, so too, the gifts of the Magi, the 3 Kings, about whom I just read to you from St. Matthew, their gifts for the infant-Jesus, also had great symbolism, i.e., depth in meaning.

Let me count the ways... very briefly, for I want to get to **the practical message** of today’s feast.

1st, there was the gift of **gold**. Ancient peoples regarded gold as the **king** of all metals. Therefore, it made an ideal gift for a king.

2nd, there was the gift of **frankincense**. Ancient peoples used incense in their **religious worship**. It is, therefore, symbolic of the divinity of Jesus.

3rd, there was the gift of **myrrh**. Ancient peoples used myrrh to prepare the dead for burial. It is, therefore, symbolic of the humanity of Jesus.

And this brings me to the practical message of the Feast of the Epiphany.

In many nations today, the Epiphany is celebrated with greater solemnity than Christmas! This is because it, specifically, celebrates Jesus' manifestation to the **Gentile world**, i.e., the non-Jewish world. You see, just as Christmas celebrates the special manifestation of Jesus to the Jews, so Epiphany celebrates his special manifestation to the Gentiles—represented in the non-Jewish or Gentile Kings from the East. It is, therefore, often referred to as **“the Feast of the Nations.”**

Besides all that, the important thing to note today is that **what was begun by Jesus** in his world, in his time...**MUST be continued by us** in our world, in our time. So-o, if Jesus is to be made known to all the nations, it must be through **our** efforts.

We must carry to the nations of the world, or at least to our own world, the ‘good news’ that:

--Jesus, the Son of God, took flesh, lived among us, & died for us as proof of God's love.
--Jesus entered human history, not just for the Jews of his time, but for the nations of all time
--Jesus came to set up God's kingdom on earth.
--Jesus came to set up a new world, a new human race...a race of children under one God, where a needy man or woman would find bros. & sisters/loving friends, not cold strangers.

This is the **“good news”** that we, because of our baptism, are to carry into our world, our work place, our neighborhood, & especially into our homes—places where we work, live, eat, & sleep.

It is the practical message of the Feast of the Epiphany, as well as the message of Christmas.

It is a message that calls each of us, in our own way, to action.

I now close with these words once again, for they sum up, in vivid imagery, the practical message of Christmas and the Epiphany:

**“When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are in their palaces,
When the shepherds are back with their sheep,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the political prisoner,
To rebuild the nation,
To bring peace to our brothers and sisters,
and...
To make music ...with the heart.”**

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you...

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.