

Solemnity of the Epiphany (EF) – January 6, 2017 – Very Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.
Winter Sacred Music Conference, Birmingham, Alabama – 10:00am Mass – 775 words

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

The three Kings or Magi were men of secure station in life.¹ From the gifts that they brought to the Infant King, we see that they were evidently men of wealth and means. They would have had prestige and the respect of the people. From the standpoint of the world, they would have been lacking in nothing. This is all that many people work towards in this life: many only seek the fleeting security and temporary fulfillment that this world can give, and which the Magi regularly enjoyed due to their position in life. But they were men of restless heart: they sought something greater. They sensed that nothing in this world could fulfill them. And so they set out in procession toward the Infant King. And there, kneeling before Him, they found what their hearts sought.

Our hearts are restless also, and so we join with the Magi in that procession which they began some 2,016 years ago. The Christmas card is right: “wise men still seek Him”. And though we might lack the wealth that the Magi evidently had such that they could bring not only fine but costly gifts to the Infant, yet we can still bring Him our best. Indeed, our journey in that procession that takes place throughout history brings us not to a manger in a small town far away, but to the altar of this church and any church we visit, for by faith we know that the incarnation of the King is perpetuated throughout history here and wherever the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is celebrated. Here we recognize His True and Real Presence, and in recognizing Him we encounter the One whom our restless hearts seek.

Yes, we bring to Him our best. Or at least we should. This is why we have been here in these days studying, learning, and sharing: so that what we offer Him in the sacred liturgy may be from the brightest and best that men and women have been inspired to compose throughout history. But more than offering our best in the externals of the sacred liturgy, we must offer the best of who we ourselves are: and we are at our best when we are humble and contrite before the Lord. For so many times we have failed in our daily offering; in the restlessness of our hearts we have sometimes sought fulfillment in choices and things that are not pleasing to our Infant King. Even the purest gold or the costliest gift is worth nothing to Him if the one who offers it is tarnished. He desires, above all, the gift of ourselves. And we are at our best when we respond to His grace and recognize our lowliness before Him with humble and contrite hearts.

The fine music that we offer Him will help: it will help to form in us the correct dispositions. Remember the words of the great St. Augustine: “How I wept when I heard your hymns and canticles, being deeply moved by the sweet singing of your Church! Those voices flowed into my ears, truth filtered into my heart, and from my heart surged waves of devotion. Tears ran down, and I was happy in my tears.”² When we meditate upon the venerable chants and when contemplate the great polyphonic pieces that echo within these walls, their truth and beauty filter into our hearts and there take root, bearing fruit in a happy and hope-filled contrition and humility. What a consolation it is, to join in the sweet singing of our mother, the Church! And what a gift it is – not only to our Infant King, but to those who pray with us as well.

On this Epiphany, then, it is good for us to examine our lives and ask if there are not still areas and aspects that are incompatible with that great procession toward the King that, in our

¹ Much inspiration for this homily came from that of Pope Benedict XVI on Epiphany in 2013 – shortly before his retirement. See his homily at: http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2013/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20130106_epifania.html

² St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book IX, chapter 6.

heart of hearts, we desire to be on. Our hearts are restless until they rest in Him.³ He wants us: each one of us – irrespective of our past failures, no matter how great. Sometimes we must take a pit-stop in the confessional, but He awaits us there as well, eager to forgive any and all of our sins. May this celebration merit for us a firmer footing on our journey toward the King of kings, our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and honor now and for ever. Amen.

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

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, Book I, chapter 1.