

**FROM THE PASTOR**  
**JANUARY 8, 2023**  
**THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

**THE LEGACY OF POPE BENEDICT XVI**

For our meditation of today we will consider the life and legacy of Pope Benedict XVI, whom many have called the last European Pope. Pope Benedict died on December 31, 2022, the last day of the year. It was the Feast of Pope Saint Sylvester who died in 327. Pope Sylvester is the first pope who was not a martyr to be venerated as a saint. It was he who baptized the Emperor Constantine in 318 and paved the way for the conversion of the Roman Empire and all the world. The Pope had announced to the world on February 11, 2013, that he would resign. (It was the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes). The resignation took effect on February 28, 2013, and thus did the Holy See become vacant. Without the death of the pope.

Pope Benedict lived more years as Pope Emeritus than he did as Pope (2005-2013). Pope Benedict was a man of genuine humility, great kindness, a true European gentleman, and a towering intellect. Although for the visitor, Rome may seem a very large City, it is often referred to a small company town. By that I mean that all the priests, religious and seminarians living, studying, and working in Rome pretty much knew one another. If they did not know one another personally, they generally would have an idea of what nation the others came from. Thus, when I was a priest student in Rome almost 30 years ago, it was not unusual to see and meet the then Cardinal Ratzinger in the section of the city of Rome where generally everyone would be, the Borgo. May I ask your pardon for a personal reference, but it was not unusual for me to see the Cardinal and speak with him several times. One would see him shopping in the Borgo, always dressed in a simple black cassock, light coat, and beret (the Italians call it a Vasco). I distinctly remember meeting him at Manucelli, a shoe store on the Borgo Pio. He was always most kind to me and would ask how my studies were going. He would always say in perfect English, and with a smile, “you must be studying like crazy!” He celebrated Mass each Friday at the Chapel of the Holy Office near St. Peter’s at 8.00AM and everyone was welcome.

Pope Benedict devoted his life to reconciling faith and reason, and, in that sense, taught like a doctor of the Church. His piety and spiritual life shone through everything he did and said. Although his was a towering intellect, he taught as a simple country pastor so that all could understand.

May God give to him the reward of the just.

**EPIPHANY**

Today we keep the glorious Solemnity of the Epiphany of Our Lord. The Epiphany is traditionally celebrated on January 6<sup>th</sup>, the Twelfth Day of Christmas, but we keep it on a Sunday so that as many as the faithful as possible may receive the grace of this mystery.

On Christmas Day it was our joy to kneel at the foot of the manger. There we joined Our Blessed Mother, the good St. Joseph, the angels, and the Shepherds. Although God had become a man on Christmas Day, the mystery was known by very few. It was as though the sun were just rising in the east with its glorious rays shining forth. But on the Feast of the Epiphany, we may say that the sun is shining forth in its noonday zenith and spreading its light throughout the whole world. That is why the Epiphany is the Feast of Light as our six candles on the altar so beautifully attest.

The word *Epiphany* means *Manifestation*. On this glorious Feast, the great mystery is made known to all the nations and peoples of the World. For on this day, the three Kings arrived bearing their wondrous gifts for the Holy Infant. In the person of the three Kings all the nations of the earth streamed to the manger. On Christmas we sang in the Liturgy, *Christus natus est nobis, venite adoremus! Christ is born for us, come let us adore Him.* But today, the Epiphany, we sing, *Christus apparuit nobis, venite adoremus! Christ has appeared for us, come let us adore Him!*

On the Feast of the Epiphany three mysteries are celebrated: The three Kings come to the manger, Our Lord manifests His glory at the Jordan River, and He reveals His glory in the First Miracle of Cana by changing water into wine. The famous author James Joyce bases his charming short story *The Dead* from the *Dubliners* on these three manifestations.

Therefore, the Epiphany fills us with joy. Many of our dear little ones may be interested to know that in Italy, Spain, and the entire Ibero-Hispanic world it is the Three Kings who bring the good children their gifts. Just as American children may leave a snack for Santa and the reindeer, so in those lands the children leave the gift of hay for the camels of the Three Kings.

*In Jesus and Mary,*

*Monsignor Pereda*