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Dear Friends

'And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising... The sight of the star filled them with delight'.

We come to the great Feast of the Epiphany. This Feast day is Christmas Day in the Churches of the East. Here in the West it has been called 'Little Christmas'. It is also Twelfth Night, the day upon which all Christmas decorations are traditionally taken down.

But at the heart of this great Feast is the Child of Bethlehem and His mysterious visitors. We will never know for certain who these great men were. We do not even know how many there were, although tradition names three. Our best guess is that they came from Persia and were 'Magi', members of a priestly caste who sought wisdom and studied the movement of the stars. They travelled a great distance to find the new born 'King of the Jews', following a great star.

I have always been moved by the passage of Scripture above, which speaks of the delight of the Magi when they see the star. They found the Child and fell down before Him in adoration. They finally reached their goal. What does this say to us?

We are reminded often in the prayers and readings of the Mass that we are pilgrims, travellers, journeying to our final destination. We do not fully belong here. Our hearts are reaching out for something else, or someone else. St Augustine puts it perfectly when he writes; 'You have made us for yourself O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you'.

Today's great Feast reminds us of our goal, our destination ; it is Jesus Himself. His star is guiding us. It is the star of faith. When all is dark, it is the star of faith that shows us the way, that gives light, that assures us we are travelling in the right direction. When we are tired and downcast, fed up or struggling, let us look up; there is the star shining in front of us. The sight of it 'fills us with delight'. Because it leads us to the same place. To Jesus. There, when we finally see Him face to face, we will fall down before Him and offer Him the poor offering of our lives with all the good and not so good. It is then that we will feel His arms around us, embracing us and drawing us close to Him, His face full of love and tenderness, an embrace that will last for all eternity.

May God bless you!

Father John



Our Lady of Compassion

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