

Have you ever thought of the wise men in the nativity story as intruders? They were definitely foreigners. If you were inhabitants of Bethlehem at the time of their visit, and especially if you were parents of very young child would you really welcome them? So much myth has been associated with what we sing as 'the three Kings of Orient!' Then they put the wrong question at the wrong moment to the wrong person. Whatever they had done, the result was tragedy. You would not welcome them to come into you region at all. After all they were foreigners, they were not one of us.

And yet according to our liturgical understanding, Epiphany is God's disclosure of the Jewish Christ to the Gentiles. And according to our Epistle reading, it seems to be God's eternal purpose *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body*. How incomparable are these two readings. One may even venture to say, 'What a tactless God!'

Nowadays we live in a pluralistic society, and when we talk about sharing the good news of Christ; immediately we have the impression that it carries negative connotations with many of us, suggesting heavy-handed attempts to force down people's throat Christian belief.

But true evangelism means sharing the Good News of Christ, and that means breaking down the walls that distinguishes 'us' for whom and among whom it is appropriate to discuss faith, from 'them' with whom it is inappropriate for us to discuss faith. Yet, if we are prepared for the shock of exposure, we can learn that evangelism is not as we feared it might be after all. It does not mean, as a preacher once said, 'airlifting individuals out of the camp of the religiously untouched into the camp of Christian community.' Well, if that does happen, then we cannot deny God's sovereignty. But it does mean realizing that the distinction between the two groups has already been breached, that the Spirit who attests Christ has pushed through this wall, has claimed the untouched as well as the participants of the camp, so that we have only to follow in our speech to include all, since all have been addressed by God.

The visit of the Wise Men is totally unexpected. But it is a lesson from which we may all learn some of the mighty freedom which is God's own freedom; that we might recognize the opening of humankind to God wherever we may see it, may greet it joyfully in whatever unexpected ways it occurs, and speak of the young Child of Bethlehem. Let us pray that a new generation of nosey Wise Men and insensitive enquiring Gentiles in our midst may be rewarded, and that our walls may be rebuilt to accommodate them!