

Well today we celebrate the Epiphany, in which we recall the visit of the Magi from the east to the Christ child in Bethlehem. Now a legitimate question one might ask is: what was the whole point of the Magi's visit to Jesus? Well we're told in Matthew's Gospel today that the Magi made the long journey to visit Jesus so that they could "do him homage." And so once the Magi find our Lord Jesus in Bethlehem, we're told that "*they prostrated themselves and did him homage.*" In other words, the Magi essentially traveled all the way from Persia to *worship Jesus*. As one commentator put it, "The Magi reveal that our search for meaning, our search for eternal life, concludes in *worship.*"

Now what is "worship"? In the context of our Catholic faith, "worship" may be defined as the acknowledgement of God's absolute supremacy as the Highest Good, Infinite Being, and Perfection Itself. It's the solemn affirmation that God is the eternal Source and Creator of all that came into existence, as well as the sole Redeemer of humanity. Worship consists in following the first and greatest commandment as our Lord Jesus solemnly declared: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." So to

worship God means to give oneself entirely to Him out of love *in response* to His perfect love for us. As Catholics, our worship of God consists of prayer, the fruitful reception of the seven sacraments, and living a holy life, all of which is rooted in praise, adoration, thanksgiving, and petition.

And just to clarify, worship is due to God *alone*—contrary to what many non-Catholics think, we do *not worship* Mary and the saints. Rather we honor and revere them out of love but also out of our desire to *worship God alone*. We honor and revere Mary and the saints *precisely* because they teach us *how to love and worship God in truth and justice*.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) explains “worship” in clear language that’s worth citing. And by the way, every Catholic should have a copy of the CCC, and if you don’t, it’s available for free online on the Vatican’s website. The catechism states in par. 2096: “Adoration is the first act of the virtue of religion. To adore God is to acknowledge him as God, as the Creator and Savior, the Lord and Master of everything that exists, as infinite and merciful Love. “You

shall worship the Lord your God, and *him only shall you serve*," says Jesus, citing Deuteronomy."

Brothers and sisters, we're *created for worship* because we're *created for communion with God*, Who is infinite Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. We're created for worship because we're created for *love and love is the foundation of all worship and God is infinite and perfect Love! All worship must be rooted in love and humility*, with the honest acknowledgement that *we are not God*, but rather creatures who are *dependent on God for everything*, especially our existence!

The Catechism elaborates in par. 2097: "To adore God is to acknowledge, in respect and absolute submission, the "nothingness of the creature" who would not exist but for God. To adore God is to praise and exalt him and to *humble oneself*, as Mary did in the Magnificat, confessing with gratitude that he has done great things and holy is his name. *The worship of the one God sets man free from turning in on himself, from the slavery of sin and the idolatry of the world.*" Brothers and sisters, worshipping God brings us true freedom,

happiness, and peace, because it unites us to the Trinity, Who alone can give us the freedom, happiness, and peace that we naturally desire.

If I could use an analogy to emphasize the importance and necessity of worshipping the one true God, fully revealed to us through Christ: just as a cell phone requires charging and a connection to a power source in order for it to be what it was designed to be, *so also we as human beings need to be connected to God through worship* in order for us to be who we were designed to be. We need to be connected to God through worship that consists of prayer, the sacraments, and holiness so that *we can be the best version of ourselves!* Just as a cell phone will be dead if it's not connected to a power source, so we will be dead *spiritually* if we're not connected to God, Eternal Source of all life and grace, through worship.

Our worship of God reaches its climax in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which the Church calls “the source and summit of our faith”! Brothers and sisters, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass exists for the *glorification of God* and the *sanctification of man*. The Mass is *not a show that exists for our entertainment!* If we want entertainment, we

can go to the Fox Berkshire theaters, which I love! The Mass exists for our sanctification and salvation because when we worship God in love, truth, and justice, **we** are sanctified and led towards eternal life. When we worship God in love, we are truly fed and nourished as His children!

Now does God even **need** our worship? **No He does not!** God is absolute Perfection itself and so He lacks **nothing** in His nature and therefore doesn't need **anything**. So while God certainly doesn't **need** our worship, He certainly **deserves it as a matter of justice**—since worship is objectively and rightly owed to God **for Who He is and what He has done for us**. At the same time, brothers and sisters, even God's command to worship is for **our benefit, not God's!** God desires us to worship Him not because **He needs it**, but because **we need it!**

God is not some egotistical monster Who created us out of any need on His part or in order to increase His own glory and power. No, God created us purely out of His infinite love and goodness so that He could **manifest His love and goodness and share His divine life with us!** If God is Love itself, then selflessness is the essence of God's nature—everything God is and does is rooted in selflessness. Even the

glory of God is rooted in His divine selflessness! As the Catechism puts it, the glory of God consists in the realization and communication of His love and goodness. And St. Irenaeus famously wrote, “*The glory of God is man fully alive.*” True worship empowers us to live life to the full and flourish as God’s children! So while worship is rightly *centered* on God, *it only benefits man.*

Brothers and sisters, since we’re created for worship, if we *don’t* worship God, we *will worship another creature or thing that is inherently inferior to God.* The worship of the one true God sets us free while the worship of ourselves and false gods enslaves us in misery and emptiness and prevents us from becoming the best version of ourselves. As the Catechism puts it in par. 2114: “Human life finds its unity in the adoration of the one God. The commandment to worship the Lord alone *integrates man* and saves him from an endless disintegration. Idolatry is a perversion of man's innate religious sense. An idolater is someone who "transfers his indestructible notion of God to *anything other than God.*"

So as we gather on the Epiphany, we must humbly and honestly ask ourselves: do we give God the proper worship that He desires and

deserves? What are we tempted to worship *in place of God*? Is it money, sex, power, food, physical exercise, image and physical appearance, social status, social media, technology, etc.? Do we have any false gods in our life that are enslaving us in misery and emptiness? Money, alcohol, food, pornography, lust, our cell phones, I pads, streaming services, etc.?

As we prepare to join the Magi in worshipping God, truly present in the Most Holy Eucharist, let us ask Him for the grace to worship Him *alone* in love, truth, humility, and justice and also thank Him for his saving love for us and for His desire to share His divine life with us *through Jesus* so that we can be happy with Him now and forever in Heaven.