

## Epiphany 2021 Homily Outline

*On the Solemnity of Epiphany the Church continues to contemplate and to celebrate the mystery of the birth of Jesus the Savior. In particular, this day stresses the universal destination and significance of this birth. – Pope Benedict XVI*

As St. Paul says in our second reading,

IT WAS NOT MADE KNOWN TO PEOPLE IN OTHER GENERATIONS  
AS IT HAS NOW BEEN REVEALED  
TO HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND PROPHETS BY THE SPIRIT:  
THAT THE GENTILES ARE COHEIRS, MEMBERS OF THE SAME BODY,  
AND COPARTNERS IN THE PROMISE IN CHRIST JESUS THROUGH THE GOSPEL.

That's the theology of this Feast – kind of interesting history – but the reality is, if we really think about it, a great challenge for us as Catholics living today. It is a real challenge because we live in a world which has, in so many ways, rejected this offer of salvation either through ignorance or indifference – and now even in growing hostility to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the truth.

How're we doing – an **honest assessment**:

2018 first time in a hundred years that the life expectancy declined for the third straight year. Our country with all that we have money, health care, technology – and our life expectancy is going down. The last time that happened was in 1918 during the time of WWI, and the Spanish Flu which killed 675,000 people in the US.

We are not in the middle of a world war and 2018 is before the pandemic – so what is it that we are dying from? Sociologists call it **deaths of despair** – we are literally losing the will to live.

- *Suicide*
- *Cirrhosis of the liver*
- *Opioid addictions*

Deaths of despair – we are desperately in need of salvation. The world is crying out desperately for help and salvation. Jesus came to save us, as I said about Epiphany, he came to save the whole world and he founded a Church for the purpose of helping every single person in this world to experience and know the Father's love – to know themselves a beloved sons and daughters of the Father. That's the work of the Church – that's the work entrusted to us.

An honest assessment of the Church however

- we live in a Church that is divided and polarized, enfeebled by the abuse crisis,
- and again is experiencing confusion and discord over some of the most basic things we believe as Catholics.
- And all the statistics bear this out – the drop in the number of Catholics, a 37% drop in the number of baptisms from 2005-2018, closing of Catholic schools, most Catholics don't attend Mass, don't believe in the Eucharist, and never go to confession.
- I could go on...

*The challenge for us is then to ask –*

- *What is God expecting of us?*
- *How is the Lord inviting us to be missionary disciples in this world and accomplish the duty of sharing the power and Good News of Jesus Christ Our Savior?*

Today, I want to just lay out for you our itinerary.

1. The first part will be to rediscover the Good News of Jesus Christ – those of you who are familiar with Fr. Ricardo's preaching or writing know that he puts this Good News together under these questions:

*Why is there something rather than nothing?*

*Why is everything so obviously messed up*

*What, if anything, has God done about it?*

*How should I respond?*

2. Our second step, which will be during the six Sundays of Lent is to draw attention to and take apart some of the foundational modern cultural assumptions or myths that we are all living with:

*Faith in progress – Denial of the fall – Marginalization of God – Intoxication with the world of space and time  
– Freedom to choose as the essence of human dignity and the source of human happiness – Consumer contentment  
the default experience*

3. The last thing is going to be to come to grips with the fact that we are not living in a Christian culture and the implications of that.

For those of you who would like something to read along with – I would highly recommend these three books.

Reading List:

*A Church in Crisis: Pathways Forward.* By Ralph Martin

*Live Not by Lies: A Manual for Christian Dissidents.* By Rod Dreher

*The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation.* By Rod Dreher

Then on Wednesday nights we'll be following up with a video series and discussions to take us through each of these steps. (Wednesday at 6pm in Camerman Hall)