

Homily for the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

As we pass through life there are things we have heard said
that we never forget.

For me, one of those was from a politician in a State to our north
proposing that **north Queensland be divided off and a new state created.**

It was the reason he gave that that I've never forgotten:
it was to '**quarantine the prosperity**' of that region he said.

'To quarantine the prosperity'.

I've never forgotten the selfishness implicit in that phrase.

It was a statement that was all the more remarkable
for being made in a nation
which calls itself the *Commonwealth* of Australia.

Today we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany.

The word 'epiphany' literally means

'a manifestation' or 'a showing',

something being made known.

In the figures of the wise men who come from foreign nations

we have the love of God revealed in the birth of Jesus

being made known to people of all nations.

And what we easily forget is that was a great jolt for some people.

Throughout history many religious people

have thought that God was *just for them*,

was only with them: a quarantining of grace.

Like that politician who wanted the wealth of his region

kept only for the people of that part of the country,

many people of faith have wanted to keep God for themselves

and have been at pains to make clear *who doesn't have God*

and who God doesn't want to have.

The important thing about the wise men wasn't that they were wise;

it was that they were from foreign lands:

the message in their visit

- *a message repeated again and again in the Gospel* -

is that the Gospel is for all:

the Epiphany is a revelation that the one God

is interested in a common humanity - one humanity:

**that no borders, no divisions,
no human separations between people
have any meaning in the eyes of God,**

**and that if we claim to seek that God,
then they can have no meaning for us:**

*there can be no quarantining of grace, or of prosperity, or of people
on our part.*

The invitation for the wise men to come to see Jesus
is a declaration of a Commonwealth:

**that we share in the common wealth of being human,
of being daughters and sons of the one God.**

And so the Epiphany reminds us
that *whenever we, whenever the Church,*

names people as being outside God's grace,

or outside our love,

then we have quarantined grace,

we have acted as selfishly as that politician and his followers.

The epiphany reminds us that there is no more ugly sight

than a person who loves God

and then sets up categories of people who they don't believe to be worthy of love

And yet, again and again, people of faith have done that, and still do that;

on the very basis of faith; using God as their very excuse.

As we enter the final week of the Christmas Season

this feast invites us to be *wise* women and men

who recognise in Christmas

a birth which declares God's love for all human beings without exception
and which demands therefore
that we don't make exceptions either.

Fr Colin