

We come to Church to find God but, as we heard yesterday, and hear again today, God can be found anywhere and everywhere, in the least of people as well as the greatest, in the least of places as well as the greatest. Isaiah doesn't quite have this universalism in mind when he projects Jerusalem, as it were, onto the world stage. The nations who come, will be coming as servants or vassals of Israel. It's Israel as a great nation state that he has in view here, to the glory of God. By the time of Matthew things have moved on and such a state is now seen in a more utopian light, a metaphor for the heavenly kingdom, and Paul has brought Christ to the nations, to the Gentiles, whose centre is Rome rather than Jerusalem. But the dynamic still holds: don't look for God in the most obvious places, that is, according to your own hopes and fears. Don't imagine, for example, that God is necessarily confined, or contained even, in a Cathedral. Fortunately, the Magi are wise to this and discover God in the most unlikely of settings, in the most unlikely of people. Herod, in contrast, is blinded by his own perception, his own need of power. It's a chilling experience to come across the mausoleums of the great, the temples and palaces of long lost empires: the Herodiums of Israel; the palaces of Vienna, of Mesoamerica and so on. For we are talking of a spiritual world mapped onto this one which doesn't necessarily fit its contours at all. And we need a different map to find it; an epiphanic map of prayer and hope, not drawn by us but drawn by another. Drawn by Christ.

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