

Epiphany – January 1-2, 2022

Today's feast of Epiphany is a continuation of the Christmas story in that it is a further revelation of the identity of the child Jesus whose birth we are celebrating. Through the story of the three magi's journey and visit to Jesus and through the realization that came to St. Paul, and even through the reading from Isaiah, we learn that the child Jesus born not only as a savior for Israel but as a savior for all the world.

This epiphany or revelation we celebrate on this feast day is, first of all, truly good news for us – reminding us that God in Jesus came to save and shepherd not only the Chosen People of Israel, but us as well and all people, and secondly, it presents us with the mission of sharing this blessing of God's salvation with all people. We are called to be stars that lead others to Christ.

That is the overall message of today's feast. Today's scriptures and especially the story of the magi's journey also has lessons and questions that are applicable to our day to day journey of life.

As the magi were drawn to study and follow the light of the special star they observed in the sky, we might ask what things are we drawn to and how are we like the magi being drawn to discover God in new places and situations? What things are we paying careful attention to and listening for? How is their journey and discovery of the child Jesus a reflection of our journey to find God in our life?

Pope Francis writes that, "Life is a journey of growth in love." All people are searching for deeper meaning in life or the right career to follow. At the same time, we hear in today's first reading and psalm that God is searching for us – he is drawing all people to the kingship of Christ.

Sometimes in looking at the journey of our own life we get the idea that we have already found God since we know about him from our religion classes and therefore our journeying and seeking for God is over. But we are

wrong. If we attend to the signs and insights that God give us, we will find that life is always an amazing journey with ever new and surprising discoveries of how God is with us and shepherding us through this life.

The journeying and searching for God continues all through our life. We continually need to be seeking how we should use the gifts God has given us. We are continually discerning God's will and mission for our life, for our family and for our community.

It is one thing to hear God's word because we attended Mass; it is another thing to actually listen to what we heard or pay attention to the signs God has shown us and then put what we heard or saw into action. --- The verse from Psalm 95 always presses upon me: "Today, listen to the voice of the Lord: do not grow stubborn, as your fathers did in the wilderness, when at Meriba and Massah they challenged me and provoked me though they had seen all my works."

Like the magi, we need to practice listening and acting on the insights God gives us. We live in an age of information overload and we keep seeking to know more things, but information is not necessarily God's word of insight or direction for us. Are we looking for God's signs and words to us or are we listening to messages of the world?

There is deep truth that says – what we sow is what we will reap. We can also say that what we seek, is what we will get. For example in this Christmas season we were all drawn in some degree to the gifts that the advertisements told us we needed to have. Yet the world's gifts (as good as they may be) will never fully satisfy us. We need to watch and listen for the ways that God is calling us and keep seeking for the way of the Lord for us that will bring us the joy and union with God.

And we can be encouraged by the way that the Lord helped the magi find the child Jesus and rewarded their search.

The magi relied on both science and faith to guide them to the Lord. The star led them to within a few miles of their destination, but then they needed guidance of faith from the chief priests and scribes to direct them to Bethlehem.

Our life is like a book of communication from God who is always speaking to us through various signs and experiences in life. But to ultimately find Christ and get closer to God we need to look most at Christ who is God made visible to us in human flesh. And to know Christ we need to reflect on the words of Scripture listening for what God wants to say to us. We can also be helped by reflecting more deeply on the mysteries of the rosary and listening for what God is saying to us through them.

So the story of the magi's journey to find the Christ-child has many lessons for us and our own journey into deeper union with/ and love of Christ. They remind us to pay attention for God's signs and directions in our life and then to act on them and the guidance we receive from God leading us to himself and guiding us in our mission in this life. On finding Christ we also see that they responded to him by worshipping him with their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh and then with the gift of themselves – prostrating themselves before him.

In this season of gifts, God's revelation and gift of Himself to us in Jesus is the greatest gift of all and calls in turn for the gift of ourselves to him and then becoming stars that will lead others to see and receive this great gift of God that is for them as well, and that he is the gift of true peace and love that all the world is seeking. How blessed we are to be led by God to receive this gift at every Mass and in all the sacraments and every other way that God gives himself to those who seek for him.