



Some reflections inspired by online copyrighted commentaries and homilies

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Solemnity of The Epiphany of the Lord

It takes courage to follow a star. You do not know where it is leading you or how long the journey will take. But if we have faith like the Magi in today's gospel, we will trust that wherever the star takes us is God's will. Having said this, we can be sure that the Magi had expectations of what they would find at the end of their journey. After all, they were searching for a newborn king. It only makes sense that they would find the child in some royal setting. This is why, when the star leads them to Jerusalem, they go immediately to the palace of King Herod. Where else would you look for a king? But Jesus was not there. Then Herod sent them to Bethlehem, and they understood that Jerusalem was not the end of their journey.

The Magi had traveled hundreds of miles from the east to reach Jerusalem. Bethlehem was only six miles more. Yet it was the last six miles that were the most difficult, because during that last part of their journey, the Magi realized that the child that they were seeking was not the king that they expected. You see, there is a big difference between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Jerusalem was a capital city with a hundred thousand inhabitants. Bethlehem was a small village of a thousand people, one hundred times smaller than Jerusalem. In Bethlehem there was no palace, no royal court, no wealth of any kind. It was no place to find a king. Therefore, the end of the Magi's journey was the most challenging. In those last six miles they had to lower their expectations. It is to the Magi's credit that they succeeded in doing so. When they arrived in Bethlehem and found only a baby in a barn, they nevertheless continued to believe that the star had led them rightly. Then they presented their royal gifts, even though they were out of place in so lowly a setting.

The story of the Magi is a reminder that God may ask us to lower our expectations in the journey of our lives. You may have always imagined that your child would grow up to be a famous neurosurgeon or would marry someone you well-liked. Then one day they tell you they want to be a chef or show you an engagement ring from someone you thought was only his or her best friend. In such circumstances, any of us can wonder, "Will I be able to accept this?" The Magi tell us, "Turn your back to Jerusalem and journey to Bethlehem."

You may have planned carefully for your retirement so that you could be financially secure and perhaps have a winter place in Florida. But then some investments go bad, and your children need your financial support. You begin to realize that retirement will involve watching your budget so that you can make ends meet. As you take this in, the Magi say, "We understand. The last six miles are the most difficult."

You may have imagined that you will grow old with your spouse, with your children and your grandchildren around you. Then divorce divides your family. As you wonder how this could have happened, the Magi say, "Don't be afraid. Keep following the star."

The Magi presented the child Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But the gift that they give us is the faith to believe that God is always leading us, even to places we never expected. And the promise of the Magi is that even if we arrive at a poor and lowly place, Jesus will be there, and we will still have gifts to give.

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