



January 4, 2026

Christmas Time: the Epiphany of the Lord

"...Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you." Isaiah 60:1

Dear Friends,

Last Sunday, Pope Leo XIV celebrated the closure of the 2025 Holy Year dedicated to Hope. The year was inaugurated by Pope Francis at Christmas 2024. The theme of the Holy year was "Pilgrims of Hope." We pave the way to a new world of compassion and love with our hope. Like the theme of the Holy Year, the Magi were people who were willing to hope for that new and better world. They set out as pilgrims on a journey to find it.

In his book *Christmas at the Nativity*, Pope Francis tells us that there are three actions by which the Magi guide our journey toward the Lord who is the light and salvation of all peoples. The Magi *see the star, they set out, and they bring gifts*.

The journey starts with seeing. Why is it that the Magi seem to be the only ones who see the star? Maybe too few look up and raise their eyes toward heaven. Many keep their eyes looking down at the ground: we are focused on merely getting by. We do not question the status quo. Do we still know how to dream for a better future, to long for God and the newness God brings? We find what we are looking for. When all we see is negativity it is because we haven't looked to see also the beautiful and good. The Magi are not happy with the status quo, just staying afloat. They realize that to truly live, we need a lofty goal, and we need to keep looking up.

The second essential thing the Magi do is *they set out* to find Jesus. His star demands that we decide to take a journey and to persist in advancing on our way. Experienced travelers know that it is important to travel light. The journey toward Jesus demands that we free ourselves from *"useless burdens and unnecessary extras that only prove a hindrance."* We also must accept the unforeseen obstacles on the map of life. *"Jesus allows himself to be found by those who seek him, but to find him we need to get up and go, not sit around, but take risks, not stand still but to set out."* Jesus demands that if we are to find him, we need to leave behind our armchairs of the familiar and the comfortable. Following Jesus is a journey that challenges us *"to overcome our fear of risk, our self-satisfaction, and our stubborn refusal to ask anything more of life."*

Having come to Jesus after the long journey the Magi do as Jesus does: *they bring gifts*. Jesus is there to give the gift of his life. The Magi present their costly gifts: gold, incense, and myrrh. The gifts symbolize the unity, divine life, and sacrificial love that Jesus offers. The Gospel becomes real in us when our journey in life ends in giving. In the Gospel Jesus says, *"The gift you have received, give freely as a gift"* (Mt. 10:8). Jesus became something small to offer mercy and compassion to the least. Pope Francis says, *"We give a gift pleasing to Jesus when we care for a sick person, spend time with a difficult person, help someone for the sake of helping, or forgive someone who has hurt us. These are gifts freely given and cannot be lacking in the lives of Christians."*

Each of us is a gift from God. On my back porch I have a sign that was given to me by parishioners years ago. It reads, *"Who we are is a gift from God, who we become is our gift to God."* The invitation of Jesus is not only to love those who love us, but also to love those who do not love us. That is where the love becomes real. So let us imitate the Magi: *looking up, setting out and freely offering our gifts*.

Peace,

Fr Ron

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