

HOMILY EPIPHANY YRA 2020

How many of you know Sean English? Let me tell you part of his story and you may remember. He is a local young man. He was attending U of D Jesuit and at age 16 he was well on his way to earning a track scholarship to Purdue University. This was his dream. His father ran track at Purdue and he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps. On April 4th of 2017, Sean was heading to Mass with his parents when they spotted an overturned vehicle with 6 teenagers inside on I-96 near Davison, so they stopped to help. Sean was hit by a car while trying to help the victims. His leg was badly injured and they eventually had to amputate his lower leg. At 16 years of age, his whole world suddenly changed. He would have to go through his entire life without his leg. He would never be able to compete in sports, which he loved to do. He would never get a track scholarship and he would probably not be able to attend Purdue. If Sean had turned to drugs and alcohol at that point it would have been understandable. But he did not. More about Sean later.

In the Gospel reading we hear the story of the magi. We do not know much about the magi. But we have romanticized the story. Most of us have the Three Kings in our nativity set. They are all dressed up in their royal robes and their crowns. It was like they looked outside the day Jesus was born and went down the street and found the new born Jesus dressed in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Like they got there with the shepherds and the angels singing: "Glory to God in the highest." That is not exactly how it happened. First of all, scripture scholars tell us that the magi probably did not get there until Jesus was 2 years old. And they came from far away lands. And they did not just make a plane reservation or hop in the car. They had to walk, and maybe they had camels or donkeys. They had no GPS and no maps. They were not traveling on roads. They were traveling through the wilderness. All they had were some ancient Biblical passages and the star. The star was a challenge for them to take a journey that could lead them to Jesus, to God. They knew it would not be easy but they decided to take the journey. And the magi stopped and told the chief priests, the scribes and Herod about the star. The chief priests and the scribes seemed to know all about it but they

refused to take the journey. Herod refused to go with the magi but took an alternate journey to kill Jesus. We all have times when stars appear in our lives and challenge us to make a journey to God. Sometimes we decide to just stay where we are. Sometimes we decide to take a path that leads away from God. The choice is ours.

So let's get back to Sean English. He could have gotten caught up in: "I was trying to do something good and look what happened. That will teach me to try to do the right thing. Why me?" We can all understand that at 16 years old he would be totally discouraged, but he decided to take the journey to God. Sean endured 8 surgeries. He got prosthesis and went through all of the physical therapy. He can walk and run again, not competitively but he can run. And he decided to go to Purdue anyway, where he is now a sophomore with a double major in mass communication and general management. He will possibly pursue a career in broadcast journalism with a focus upon sports. And he visits the Children's Hospital and the Rehabilitation Institute to speak to people who have undergone amputations. They call him when they have amputees that need a coach. Sean is a man of great courage. This is what he said about his experience: "I've never had the shaken faith. It's never been something that I regret. It's never been something that I've been mad about because it's clearly God's plan for me to do something. I really didn't think about that a lot until probably three weeks out. I started thinking, 'Oh, why is this happening to me?' Then, I was starting to answer my own questions. I wasn't asking 'why?' in a negative connotation. I was trying to figure out what my calling was. I'm just taking it step by step." And there is one more thing that he would like to do at Purdue. He said: "It would be really cool to be the mascot at Purdue because the mascot at Purdue wears shorts and people would clearly see my leg. It is a way to advocate for people like me."

So, do you think you may see the star this year? Are you ready to take the journey to God?