

HOMILY EPIPHANY YRB 2018

The other day I was talking with a single woman about a new job she was considering. She told me that she felt God was calling her to take the job. She thought it would be fulfilling. She thought it would be challenging and she would probably be very good at it. She thought she could really help people doing this job. She did not have any family commitments that would prevent her from taking this job. After about an hour conversation I asked her: “What is preventing you from taking this job?” She thought for a while and then she said: “The softer the chairs that harder it is to get out of them.” And of course, I knew exactly what she meant. She was in a really comfortable place and it was hard to walk away from that. The truth is, in our daily lives we spend most of our time looking for comfort, materially, psychologically and spiritually. Now certainly we need to have our basic physical and psychological needs met before we can move forward spiritually. But the goal of the spiritual life is not to be comfortable. The goal is to be whole. The goal of the spiritual life is to grow closer in our relationship with God and to be better able to love and serve other people. We are all on a spiritual journey and we need to accept the fact that life is difficult, and we have to face the difficulties to grow spiritually. I always get a little apprehensive when I get too comfortable. I know God will bring new challenges into my life. And the softer the chairs the harder it is to get out of them.

In the Gospel reading we hear about the Epiphany of the Lord. The Three Wise Men were aware of the prophecy about the new born king of the Jews and had seen the star at its rising. They were not sure exactly where to go, so they decided to stop and ask the current King of the Jews, King Herod. The Gospel indicates that: “When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled and all of Jerusalem with him.” And I wonder why they were all so troubled.

Now King Herod was king. Your chairs cannot get more comfortable than that! He certainly did not want to get out of his chair, but what about the people of Jerusalem? They had been waiting for the Messiah all of their lives. They knew the prophecy, they could have seen the star at its rising just as easily as the Three Wise Men. But even after the Three Wise Men brought it to their attention, none of them went with them to find the Messiah. We are not sure where the Three Wise Men came from; scripture scholars speculate Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia or Yemen. The point is that they came from a long distance by camel. They did not hire a car or schedule a flight. The journey for them was hard. All the people of Jerusalem had to do was get out of their chairs, but I guess their chairs were too comfortable. If the Messiah were finally here, their whole lives would change, and they just did not want to get out of their comfort zone.

I think we have these epiphanies in our lives, but sometimes our chairs are soft and it is too hard to get out of them. Being Catholic is not about being comfortable. If we are going to be Catholic, life is going to be difficult at times. Life will be very good, but it will not be comfortable or easy. Being Catholic is not just about a set of beliefs. It is about making a commitment to the people in our lives. If we are going to make people feel that they belong at St. Edith, we have to make a commitment to them. If we are really going to make a commitment we need to embrace each other's dysfunction and incompleteness because we are all in some way dysfunctional and incomplete. We cannot just commit to the people who are like us, or the people we are comfortable with. That is not much of a commitment. We need to help everyone we are able to help. We need to be committed to everyone in the Parish Family. That is what it means to be Catholic. That is what it means to be part of a Parish Family. You are going to have to get out of the chairs even when they are very soft.

11:00 CYO Mass: To be part of a CYO sports team you have to make a commitment to the other team members and to the coach. You have to be committed to everyone, not just those you get along well with, not just those who are gifted in sports. It means giving every kid a chance to play even if they are not a very good athlete. It means making every kid feel as though they belong. Sometimes it means stepping aside and letting someone else get some recognition. Sometimes it means going to practice, even when you don't feel like it because you have a commitment to the team. Sometimes it means going along with the direction that the coach is giving, even if you do not like it just because he or she is the coach. Sometimes it means doing your best even when there is little likelihood of winning the game because your first commitment is to the team and not to winning. That is what being Catholic is all about.