

HOMILY EPIPHANY YRC 2019

To dream the impossible dream
To fight the unbeatable foe
To bear with unbearable sorrow
To run where the brave dare not go

To right the unrightable wrong
To love pure and chaste from afar
To try when your arms are too weary
To reach the unreachable star

We encounter an unreachable star in the Gospel reading today, and the three wise men were the only ones who reached for the unreachable star. They recognized it as an epiphany or a sudden revelation or insight that usually catches us off guard. This recognition is what made them the “wise guys.” It was not a private epiphany, anyone could have seen the star, but they were the only ones who recognized it as an epiphany. We had three different reactions to the epiphany in the Gospel reading. We have the reaction of Herod who reacted with unreasonable fear. When we react out of unreasonable fear it is not from God. The wise guys told Herod that they were looking for the new born King and he was threatened by that. He was king and he was afraid of an infant? That is unreasonable fear. It would be many years before Jesus could be a threat to him and he had many years to investigate the situation. As it turns out, Jesus was not a threat to him. When Jesus was in his 30’s and they wanted to make him king he rejected it and told them that his kingdom was not of this world. But Herod acted out of unreasonable fear, and when we act out of unreasonable fear, this is where evil can dwell and this was true of Herod. He had infants age two and below in the vicinity of Bethlehem killed. We call them the Holy Innocents and that was evil. The second reaction came from the chief priests and scribes. When Herod asked them about what the wise guys said, they knew all about it. They knew that the new ruler of Israel was in Bethlehem. So why didn’t they go to see him? They were comfortable where they were at and they did not want to change. If the Messiah had come, their whole lives would change and they did not want to change. Rejecting what God is calling us to in

our lives because we do not want to change can also lead to evil as it did with the chief priests and the scribes. They eventually crucified Jesus so they did not have to change. The third reaction was from the wise guys. They followed the star, they found Jesus, and they believed the dream that told them not to return to Herod and went home by another way. So how can we be wise guys and recognize the epiphanies in our lives?

If you think you have an epiphany that calls you to make decisions that are inconsistent with what God has called you to do up until now, this is probably not from God. God wants you to fulfill your responsibilities. If you are married with children, God is probably not calling you to leave your family and continue the work of Mother Theresa in India. We do not have many really big epiphanies in our lives and when we do we need to spend time praying about them. The really big epiphany I had in my life was to leave my law practice, sell my house and all of my stuff, go to the seminary for 6 years and become a priest. It took me a couple of years to make this decision. God does not overpower us with the epiphanies. He works through our human nature. He respects our free will, and he does not overpower that. Sometimes we think it would be nice if God gave us an overwhelming sign and then we would follow it. When I was struggling with the decision to become a priest, the vocations director told me: "You are not going to get struck by lightning; you need to make a decision." And the majority of the epiphanies in our lives are about small decisions. If it is something that is consistent with your life choices but something you would not come up with, this could be an indication that it did not come from you but came from God. If unreasonable fear prevents you from doing something, fear of success, fear of failure, fear that it is going to be too hard, this is not from God. If you are not doing something because you do not want to change, I am too old to change, I am too young, I am very comfortable where I am thank you, that is probably not from God either.

So, can you be one of the wise guys? Can you recognize the epiphanies of your life and follow them? Can you reach the unreachable star?