

HOMILY ~ EPHIPHANY JANUARY 2, 2022

Do you know what I know?

A child, a child,

shivers in the cold,

let us bring him silver and gold.

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Silver and gold? How about a blanket? Did you ever wonder about the gifts that the three wise men brought to Jesus, gold, frankincense and myrrh? Maybe formula, diapers and baby clothes would have been more appropriate, but I guess they did the best they could. They were expecting to find the new King of the Jews, so they brought with them the gifts that they thought would be appropriate for a king. Henry Van Dyke wrote a fictional account of the fourth wise man called *The Story of the Other Wise Man*. He never caught up with the other wise men, but searched for the King of the Jews for many years. He brought three precious jewels that he intended to give to the king. On his journey, he encountered people who were in great need. One by one he sold the jewels and helped the people he encountered. He searched for the King of the Jews his whole life; and at the end of his life, he realized he found him many times and worshiped him each time he helped someone in need.

We are all searching for Jesus. That is why we are Christian. It is easy to be Christian in our culture. Being Christian is very accepted in Livonia. It is not always so easy to be Christ-like. That is the challenge of a lifetime. Hopefully we will meet Jesus in a new way in the coming year. When you meet him, what are the gifts you are going to give him? I don't think he wants your money or your stuff. That would kind of be like the gold, frankincense and myrrh, don't you think? I think what he wants from us is to love and to serve one another.

My epiphany this Christmas is that Jesus wants us to treat one another with loving-kindness. I think that is what we need coming out of COVID. I think that would go a long way in improving things in our country. The Oxford dictionary defines loving-kindness as "tenderness and consideration toward one another." When they use it in a sentence, this is what they say: "The impression he left behind was one of calmness and loving-kindness." I want to be that guy. How about you? In the letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians 4:32, St. Paul says: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." That is what I think we should go for!

One of the things we need to stop doing to treat others with loving kindness is to stop judging others based upon one fact, putting them in a particular group, and then thinking you know all kinds of things about them. For example, I am pro-vaccine. I have not made any secret of that. But based upon that fact, you do not know if I am Democrat or Republican, you do not know what I think about anything else. You may think you know everything about me, but you do not. Now if you have been coming here or watching the streaming, you know a lot about me because I tell you what I think every week; but you cannot make any judgments about me based upon my position on vaccines. Desmond Tutu, the human rights advocate and spiritual leader, died recently. This is what he said: "God's dream is that you and I and all of us will realize we are family. That we are made for

togetherness, for goodness and for compassion.”

I think there will always be groups, but we have to stop looking at them as being opposed to one another. I think we need to move away from the us and them attitude. It is just us. When we have an us and them attitude, we act out of anger and fear. That causes us to behave in irrational ways. We need to stop judging opinions that we do not agree with and dismissing them without thinking about them. Maybe we can just allow them to be without judging for a little while. Maybe things are not as black and white as we originally thought. Maybe some of the people that we do not agree with can become our teachers. Maybe we can learn by listening to different opinions. If we stop judging, condemning and acting out of anger and fear, we can figure out how to treat one another with loving-kindness. That is a fitting gift for Jesus. Maybe we can start a trend here at St. Edith.

Love & Peace,
Fr. Jim