

HOMILY ~ THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

January 7/8, 2023

*Day by day
Day by day
Oh, dear Lord three things I pray
To see thee more clearly
Love thee more dearly
Follow thee more nearly
Day by day*

That is what this life is. It is about our search for God. In the words of St. Augustine, *“Our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”* I think the one thing that all cultures have in common is the search for something spiritual, a search for a higher power. I think as Christians, our search is to know Jesus, not just know about him. This is a life long journey.

In the Gospel reading today, we hear about the magi. I think they were on a spiritual journey. They were traveling to a foreign land to see the newborn king of the Jews, a religious leader. They were following a star, not to learn more about astrology, but to find something spiritual. It was not a scientific study. When they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they believed the warning and followed it. They followed the star, and it led them to Jesus.

What is your star? Sometimes we need something out of the ordinary in our lives to trigger our quest for God. For the magi, it was an unusual star in the heavens. It may be a positive change in our lives, like getting married. Our lives should change in a positive way, and we may want to bring God into that relationship. *The couple that prays together stays together.* It is more than just a saying, it is supported by evidence based research. Maybe it is the birth of our first child. We may want to have them Baptized. We may want to share our faith with our child. We have to have something to share. It may be something that is perceived as negative in our lives, an illness, the loss of a job, a financial crisis. When these things happen, we need to change. We may decide to bring Jesus on the journey, and maybe it will not turn out to be a negative thing after all. God can bring positive things from seemingly negative events. Or maybe things are going well in our lives, and we want to keep them on track with God’s help. Weekly Mass attendance can be very helpful. We try to do the best we can to provide

a spiritually nourishing experience each week at Mass; but even if it is just an hour of quiet time to focus upon the Lord with no distractions, it is of great value. What is your star?

In the Gospel reading, we learn that Herod was greatly troubled. What was the star that he was following? His star was hanging on to his power, authority and control over others. That did not lead him to God. It led him to do many horrible things in his life. Are you following the wrong star? Is it the money star? Is it the successful career star? Is it the pursuit of the dream house star? These things are good and have their place, but they cannot be the driving force in our lives. They will not lead us to God. They will not lead to meaning and satisfaction in our lives in and of themselves.

The reading says that not only was Herod troubled, but all Jerusalem with him. They had been waiting for the Messiah for years. They should have been overjoyed. But they were troubled. They may have been troubled because they did not want to change. Change is difficult. They may have believed that they knew God as much as they wanted to know God and, spiritually, they were done. In the spiritual realm, we are never done. It is a life long journey. It is like a marriage or any really close relationship. When we stop working at it is when we will start having problems with the relationship, and eventually it will fall apart. When we stop working on our relationship with Jesus, it will stagnate. God is much bigger than we can ever know completely, so we are never done.

So, what is your star? What is the driving force in your life? Is it leading you in the right direction? Is it leading you toward God? Are you satisfied with where your life is headed, or do you think something is missing?

Our hearts are restless until they rest in you, my Lord.

Love & Peace,

Fr. Jim