

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who gathered with us as a community to celebrate our Christmas Masses. It was a source of grace and edification. Such beautiful Masses would not have been possible without the incredible generosity and talent of so many people: Environment Committee, musicians, play choreographers and actors, electricians and sound experts, lectors, altar servers, sacristans, ushers, Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist; Mr. Al Stanley and Crippen and Flynn for the generous gift of the poinsettias and the parishioners who contributed to our second collection for Christmas flowers and our dedicated parish staff. The contributions of so many gifted members of our parish community exemplify the spirit of the MAGIS on this day when we recall the visit of the Magi to the newborn king.

I would also like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to Fr. Edgardo who celebrated his 15th anniversary of priesthood ordination on Friday, December 20th. We are so grateful for Fr. Edgardo's personal witness and ministry which are rooted in generosity, selflessness and kindness. He is a model for me and others of what it means to be a companion of Jesus. On a light note, Fr. Kyle jokingly reminded me that Fr. Edgardo has more years of priestly ministry than Fr. Kyle and myself combined! Thanks to Fr. Edgardo and Fr. Coleman, it's good to have some seasoned veterans around!

Today as we celebrate the Epiphany, we conjure up the familiar image of the three kings traveling to see Jesus. There is the typical understanding that the presentation of the gifts by the Magi is a one-way proposition: they give and Jesus gets. However, the Epiphany is called that precisely because what takes place is much more transactional and reciprocal.

The Three Kings were men of stature and learning; they had been successful by any measure and yet they were not totally fulfilled. There was a desire to learn more - to conquer the mystery of life. That is why they traversed from the corners of the earth and followed the Star of David. Once they were there, on bended knee, they understood for the first time the words of the prophet Isaiah we heard proclaimed in the First Reading:

"Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow, for the riches of the sea shall be emptied...the wealth of the nations shall be brought to you." We know that the three kings brought great treasure; however, they walked away with much more. They were to report back to Herod...and yet an angel told them to go a different route. If their lives had not been transformed by being in such close proximity to Our Lord, the Messiah, they could easily have gone back to Herod. Their lives had been irrevocably changed. That is what an encounter with the Lord did to them...and so does to us.

The experience of the Magi also tells us that the promise made to the people of Israel, the covenant forged to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants would not be for them alone. St. Paul reminds the Ephesians that the Gentiles too, are heirs to the promise of Jesus Christ: that those who believe in him will inherit eternal life. This promise of the Father is not meant for the Israelites alone.

In coming into the world, Jesus ensures that salvation is immediate and open to all - even to the Magi who themselves came from the East. The kingship of Jesus, so maligned and misunderstood by many, permeates every geographic boundary, every human construct of what power and honor is all about. This reality is also the triumph of the Magi. The three kings represent to the human experience that deep-seated longing we all possess, and have, since the beginning of Adam and Eve. We travel the rugged and circuitous road of life looking and longing for something deeper and greater than ourselves.

Like the Magi, the road is sometimes fraught with danger and the sinful inclinations of men. Yet, they, as we, keep on keeping on. Matthew describes the Magi's encounter with Jesus. "They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage." This is the Epiphany - the new understanding of true power, true wealth, true kingship. Here the mighty are bowed down, so awed by what they see that they fall to their knees. They give their gifts, only unexpectedly to find they have been given so much more.

So, too, for us. May our own lives continue to be filled with a thousand different epiphanies...signs of God's great grandeur among us. We begin by taking that initial step shown by the shepherds and the Wise Men: knowing that we are simple, humble, incapable of knowing everything, guided by the desire to know more...a desire...by God's grace...which leads us, on bended knee, before the newborn King!

Happy New Year!
Fr. Tom