

The gift of our service reveals what we seek.

The Epiphany of the Lord – Year B

IS 60:1-6, PS 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13, EPH 3:2-3A, 5-6, MT 2:1-12



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Good Morning. Our Gospel today is one that we all know, the story of the three wise men. A question that pops up from time to time, asks, “What if the wise men had been women?” The popular answer is that “The women would have stopped and asked directions, arrived on time, helped deliver the baby, cleaned the stable, made a casserole, and brought practical gifts.”

Of course, there is more to the story. The magi were members of a Persian priestly caste well known through the ancient world as astrologers and interpreters of dreams. The idea of a star signaling the birth of a great person or king was popular in the ancient world. Prophecy foretold that a star would signal the coming of the Jewish messiah. Following their intuition, the magi followed a star that came to rest over the place where the child lay.

The paranoid behavior of King Herod dramatically plays into the story. Herod was not Jewish but appointed by Rome to rule over the Jews. The thought that he might lose his place of power would cause him to kill his three sons as rivals to the throne. As bizarre as it seems, Herod, seeing the infant Jesus as a rival, would kill all male children in Bethlehem under two years of age.

There is an interesting contrast between the power struggle of Herod and the vulnerability of the infant Jesus. Christ enters our world, not with legions of soldiers, but with the innocence and dependence of a newborn. God entrusts to Mary and Joseph, and to the world, the gift of His Son. The story of the magi is important because it mirrors our spiritual journey. Like the wise men, we seek in our lives that which is sacred. We listen for whispers of truth and hope. We follow the whispers like the light of a star, seeking the peace of the Lord Jesus.

When we encounter Jesus, what gifts could we hope to bring that might honor him? If not gold or silver, then perhaps our compassion, that we might see, hear and respond to the needs of our world.

Dr. Howard Thurman, theologian and civil rights activist, once wrote:

“...When the song of the Angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the Kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken hearted,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.”

Later in his Gospel Matthew writes, “Lord, when did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” MT 25:37-40

The infant Jesus came to bring love, peace and justice to all people; Jew, Muslim, Protestant, Catholic and most especially those rejected by society.

Over the holidays, my immediate and extended family shared several meals. On one occasion there were over thirty of us together at my sister's home. The smells from the kitchen told of the coming meal. I could count at least, a half-dozen or more individual conversations taking place. In the background were voices from the kitchen making final preparations. "Are the rolls ready?" "No I just put them in a minute ago." "How about the gravy?" "It's done but we may want to re-warm it." Over the sound of a mixer and the many voices and conversations, I found a deep and quiet peace in family coming together to share a meal. Recipes and memories would join ancestors to our meal as well.

We here, also, come together as family to share a meal. Listen to the voices as we greet each other before Mass. The St. Tom's welcome is genuine. Our lectors read, sharing the stories of our heritage. In these stories and the Gospel, we listen for whispers of truth and hope. That is our wisdom. Like the magi, we listen for and seek a greater truth. In our care of one another, and the marginalized, we touch that Sacred Truth.

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References

All scripture quotations are taken from;. (1987). *The New American Bible, Revised edition*. USCCB.

I welcome your questions and comments. My email is fsila@sttomskazoo.org. (n.d.).