



Feast of Epiphany (Year B)



Matthew 2: 1 – 12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.”

When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it was written by the Prophet: “And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.””

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.”

When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

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Reflection:

Much has been written in regards to the star. One thing is sure: it was no ordinary star (stars do not move and stop as this one does). Rather, the star serves a purpose much like faith; whereas the wise

draw on it for guidance and strength, foolish Herod fears and seeks to destroy whatever may come from it. Guided by faith, what many peoples would have seen as an ordinary child, the wise men do homage and offer him their gifts.



Table Discussion (at mealtime):

Share an experience in your life where you had to rely on your faith.



Family Connection:

Our journey here on Earth is much like following a star, we do not always know where the Lord may want us to be, but we are assured of his help and guidance along the way.

Most of us can relate to the false assumption (kings are born in royal courts) that the wise men made. Many of us have been experienced a side trip or two along our journey. And yet, for every side trip, there is a sign post: a re-adjustment along the way.

Helping your child navigate through the decisions, trials and detours in their life is a major part of parenting. Establishing and maintaining a healthy two-way communication channel is of utmost importance. Helping your child develop a healthy two-way communication channel with God and their faith is even more important. The wise men were able to overcome their false assumptions not by rejecting what they held to be true, but by being open to that which was not known to them.

Some key virtues:

1. Charity: God's love as the root of all that we say and do.
2. Chastity: Not to be ruled by our earthly desires.
3. Diligence: To do the best we can.
4. Humility: To be open to instruction/correction.
5. Kindness: To show concern for others.
6. Patience: To be able to deal with opposition without getting upset.
7. Temperance: To exercise moderation.
8. Honesty: To speak the truth.
9. Courage: To do what is right (even when it is difficult).
10. Discernment: To know God's Will / What is truly needed.
11. Generosity: The joy of giving.
12. Perseverance: To do something despite the difficulties.
13. Gratitude: To be thankful.
14. Compassion: To be able to share in someone else's feelings.

Other possible words: trust, hope, faith, joy



Activity (a quiet reminder):

Using palm-sized stones, paint the name of each of these wonderful gifts on each one. You can introduce each virtue as you paint the name of it on the stone. You may even want to add one or two virtues of your own. Then put them in a small bowl and place them on a coffee table. Once every month or two, pick out one of the stones and use it as a conversation starter at mealtime or bedtime. Do not overdo it. Allow them to sit around on your coffee table as a reminder for what is most important.

Children might also make their own bowl of virtue stones for their own room. Encourage them to pick out a stone and hold it in their hands whenever they feel they need help in practicing this virtue. Praying with the stone in hand can be a good way to help them draw on that virtue whenever they see a need for it.



A Morning Offering:

(As the Wise Men offered Jesus their gifts, so we begin our morning by offering our day to God.)

For love of me you came to earth; you gave your life for me.
So, every day you give me now, I give back happily.
I give you my laughter, my tears, my thoughts; I give you my words and deeds.
I give them to you and pray, O God, "bless my little seeds."



Mass on Sunday (a reflection):

Many families struggle with the idea of coming to church on Sundays. Sometimes it requires a monumental effort, akin to long journey of the Wise men, to come. Rather than looking at it as an obligation, try to approach it as a bringing of your gifts: your time, your effort, your week, yourself. You may not feel you have much to bring; the week may not have gone well. In those cases, bring your failings, your disappointments, your worries and your struggles. These, too, can make for some wonderful gifts, if we can entrust them to the Lord and ask that he make something of them.

No matter your disposition, even if you're bored and you would rather be somewhere else, offer it to God and tell him: "This is where I am at; I wish I could give you more." And God, in all his goodness, will take what is yours and will give you what is his: all the gifts you need, both now and for the days to come.

We bring a bit of money and the little we have done, and he transforms it into his work on Earth. We bring gifts of bread and wine, hardly enough to satisfy, he transforms them into the very gift of himself to us. The exchange is quite miraculous, you see. We are always made the richer for coming.

What gifts are you bringing to Mass this week?

An Offering of Self Before Jesus in the Tabernacle:

Dear Jesus, I come to you before the Blessed Sacrament,
I offer you all I have:
my life, my cares, my worries and my concerns.
I offer you my friendships, my work, my play and my times of rest.
I offer you my thoughts, words and deeds and even what I failed to do.
I offer you my everything, and pray that I may be changed;
From now on, to walk a better road, a path I share with you.



I Brought Jesus my Teddy Bear (a bedtime story):

Sally had a puzzled look on her face, the kind that made you wonder what was going on inside her head. It was obvious that something was troubling her, but she hadn't put it into words. She kept looking at the nativity scene, at Baby Jesus and the three kings.

"What's wrong Sally?" Mom asked. "Why that strained look on your face? You've been looking at that nativity set for the last five minutes. Is there something I can help you with?"

"Mom," Sally began. "Why did they bring Jesus gold, frankincense and myrrh? They don't seem like very good gifts. Babies need soothers, things that rattle and Teddy Bears. Gold, perhaps, to buy things with, but not frankincense and myrrh."

"I agree," Mom said. "It does seem kind of silly, if you look at it that way. In reality, Baby Jesus didn't need any of those things. I am not even sure if Joseph and Mary had any use for them either."

"Then why did they bring such gifts and why do we still hear of them today. When Uncle Sid gave me that hula hoop, I made sure to thank him, but I didn't go tell my friends about it. It wasn't the kind of gift you talk about."

"I agree," Mom said again. "There are some gifts that are best left unmentioned, but these three gifts are special. Special because of what they symbolize."

Sally looked her mom in the face. "What is so special about these gifts?" She asked.

"Gold is a gift fit for a king," Mom began. "By giving Jesus gold, they are not trying to make him rich so that he is able to buy things, but to show that he is king."

"I kind of knew that," Sally admitted. "But what about the other two? Frankincense and myrrh."

"Frankincense?" Mom half asked. "That's a type of incense used by priests."

"Priests?" Sally cried out. "Jesus is a Priest? I thought priests stood at the altar, like Fr. Shaw, and tell us what to do. Jesus wasn't anything like that."

"Priests are meant to bring God to us," Mom explained. "And that is what Jesus came to do. In fact, he is the only one and perfect priest, because Jesus is God himself."

"Okay, I kind of get that," Sally said, even though she didn't understand it fully. "But what then about Myrrh? I don't even know what that is."

"Myrrh is kind of tricky," Mom agreed. "And it is not so easy to explain. It is a type of perfume that is used when a person has died and they are beginning to smell. This gift is telling us that Jesus would die to save us all, that God came to conquer death for us."

"Okay, I guess," Sally said. "But they still don't seem like the best gifts to give a kid."

"Except for the gold, perhaps you are right," Mom agreed. "Sometimes it is hard to understand what others bring, or even what others do. But each one brings what she feels best, and that's what makes all gifts good."

"I wish someone would have given him a Teddy Bear," Sally spoke after a long period of quiet thought. "I think he would have enjoyed it a lot better."