

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer for Epiphany ~

O God
Maker of all,
and lover of what you have made,
you have sent Jesus
into my life,
born of Mary,
to share my humanity.
And you send his spirit
So that I might share his divinity.

Help me to find Jesus,
your son.
I need people
who make his presence real to me,
through their lives.
They are the star for me today,
They are the light
Leading to you.
Help me to become a sign of faith —
One who has found the Christ.

I bring not the richness of the sea
nor the wealth of nations.
But I bring myself,
the life that I live,
as I stand before you this day.
Amen.

CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:

The Campus Ministry Office is located in **Our Lady Chapel**.
phone: [440] 473-3560 or 216-570-9276 [cell]. e-mail: blazekj@gilmour.org

Our Lady Chapel



Our Lady Chapel is a Roman Catholic community founded in the love of the Father, centered in Christ, and rooted in the Holy Cross tenets of building family and embracing diversity. We are united in our journey of faith through prayer and sacrament, and we seek growth through the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in liturgy and outreach, while responding to the needs of humanity.

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY:

The Feast of the Epiphany is one of the oldest Christian feasts, though throughout the centuries it has celebrated a variety of things. The word “Epiphany” comes from a Greek verb meaning “to reveal”, and all of the various events celebrated by the Feast of the Epiphany are revelations of Christ to humankind. Like many of the most ancient Christian feasts, Epiphany was first celebrated in the East, where it has been held from the beginning almost universally on January 6th. Among Eastern Catholics [both Roman and Orthodox], the feast is known as “Theophany” — which means “the revelation of God”.



The Feast of the Epiphany originally celebrated four different events — The birth of Jesus, the visitation of the Magi, the Baptism of Jesus, and the changing of water into wine at the wedding in Cana. Each of these is a revelation of God to humankind — at Christ’s Baptism, the Holy Spirit descends and the voice of God the Father is heard declaring that Jesus is His Son; at the wedding in Cana, the miracle reveals that God transforms ordinary things into divine experiences; at the Nativity, the angels bear witness to Christ, and the shepherds — representing the people of Israel — bow down before Him; and at the visitation of the Magi, Christ’s divinity is revealed to the Gentiles — the other nations of the earth.

Eventually, the celebration of the Nativity [Christmas] became separate among Western Christians, but the Feast of the Epiphany still commemorated the Baptism, the first miracle, and the visit from the Wise Men. Thus, The Feast of the Epiphany came to mark the end of Christmastide — or the Twelve Days of Christmas.

Over the centuries, the various celebrations were further separated in the West, and now the Baptism of the Lord is celebrated on the weekend following the Feast of the Epiphany, and the wedding at Cana is commemorated on the weekend after the Baptism of the Lord.

In many parts of the world [outside the West], the celebration of Epiphany is even more important than the celebration of Christmas. In many places in the world, Christians still exchange gifts on the Epiphany — the day on which the Wise Men brought their gifts to the Christ Child.

2022 CALENDARS:

Calendars for the year 2022 are available for your taking. Besides having space for you to write your family appointments, the calendar also contains information about Mass and Reconciliation times here at Our Lady Chapel. We wish to thank the Schulte-Mahon-Murphy Funeral Homes for their generous donation of these 2022 Calendars to us. Please feel free to take as many calendars as you would like. Thank you.

**SPECIAL THANKS:**

A very special thank you to all who helped decorate the Chapel for the Christmas Season — Janet, and Edwin Heryak, Michael Hughes, Charlene Kavran, Tina Newton, Sharon and Greg Fedele, Sue Leonore, Elina and Joe and Joe Gurney, Patsy and Teresa Schauer, Gilmour Academy Maintenance and, of course, Patty Szaniszlo. Thanks, also, to all our Council Members, and also to our Chapel Musicians — Andy Andino, Jon Andino, Ryan Andino, Chris Bowan, Wendy Andino, Brother Ken, Stephanie Leonor, Jill Thompson. Thanks to all who helped with our Live Streaming — Loren, Denise, Michael and Charlie Schade. And finally we want to thank Miklus Florist. Thanks also to all who have sent special Christmas greetings and gifts to the Chapel and to Father John — your kindness is truly a blessing.

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers.

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For John Visconsi, brother of Tom [*61] and Tony Visconsi [*75] and Paulette Poklar, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Sheila Coyne, aunt of Katie Coyne [*24], who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Frank Nannicola, grandfather of Cassie [*17], Frank [*18], and Mia [*19] Nannicola, who is recovering from cancer surgery.
- For Joseph Boehm who is critically ill with COVID
- For Marie Forsythe, who is in rehab
- For Brother Paul Kelly, C.S.C., who is under the care of hospice.

FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Della Worobetz, grandmother of Jake [*10], Connor [*13], and Peter [*14] Hurley.
- For Sister Myra Skebe, O.S.U.
- For Anthony Constantino, father of Nancy Hagan Constantino [*83] and Patty Constantino [*85]
- For Sister Dolores Stanko, S.N.D.
- For Deacon Richard Woods {St. Ann’s Parish}
- For Brother Daniel Dardoe, C.S.C.
- For Sister Maureen O’Keeffe, C.S.C.
- For Quinn Clarke.
- For Sister Eileen Collins, O.S.U.
- For Robert Kowalski
- For Sister Helen Brown, C.S.J.
- For Sister Ruth Pearl, S.N.D.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For all those suffering from COVID.
- For a family going through a difficult time.
- For an end to violence and racial injustice in our society.
- For a growth in awareness of the blessing of family life.
- For all those struggling with various addictions.
- For an end to sexual abuse and lack of respect for human persons.
- For a greater respect for human life, from the moment of conception until natural death.
- For all caregivers.
- For all service men and women serving our country, and for their families.
- For a greater awareness of our call to create a more humane and just society.

EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS:

We are currently discerning a new group of Eucharistic Ministers who would undergo training within the next month. If you feel that the Lord is calling you to this ministry, we would be delighted to include you in that ministry here at Our Lady Chapel. Both adults and teens [must be a Senior in High School] are welcome to participate in this very special ministry. We are in need of ministers for both our Saturday evening and Sunday morning Masses. **Contact Father John or the chapel office [440-473-3560] if you feel called to this ministry.** We are always in need of Eucharistic Ministers.

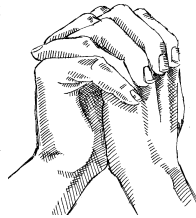


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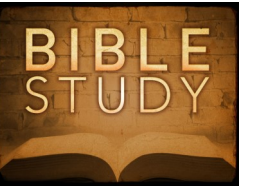
PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Julie Arndt who is undergoing treatment for COVID
- For Kelsey Cesar, Yearbook Co-Ordinator, who is recovering from shoulder surgery.
- For Matt Ruppe, Ice-Arena Staff Person, who is critically ill.
- For Carol Patton, who is recovering from surgery.
- For Brother Joseph Annan, C.S.C., who is critically ill following a seizure.
- For Cassandra Williams [*15], sister of Sebastian Williams [*18] who is undergoing treatment for a soft tissue cancerous tumor which is inoperable.
- For Tammi Ramsey, who is critically ill with COVID
- For Catherine Ivery, aunt of Kitchen associate director, Bobbie Bonner, who is serious ill with COVID
- For Vicki Giancola, mother of Vince Giancola [*23], who continues treatment for cancer.
- For Joseph Borkey [*82], brother of Jeff [*80] and Jerrod [*87] Borkey, father of Christian Borkey [*16], and uncle of Jerrod [*12] and former Gilmour student, Ian Borkey, who is undergoing treatment for cancer
- For Katie Poelking [*01], sister of TJ Poelking [*98], who is undergoing treatment for breast cancer.
- For Mary Goers who is undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer.
- For Serena DiCillo, daughter of David DiCillo [*84] and Polly Duval DiCillo [*84], and granddaughter of long-time Gilmour teacher, Bonnie DiCillo, and niece of John [*83], Dawn [*86], and Dan [*88] DiCillo and Laurie Duval Muller-Girard [*81], who is recovering from a bone marrow transplant
- For Ray Gruss who is battling cancer.
- For John Weathers, who is undergoing treatment for liver cancer.
- For Bruce Schwartz, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Bill Barrett, who is undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer.
- For Mary Curran, mother of Megan [*10], Carolyn [*12], and Catherine [*17] Curran, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Addison McKito, sister of Aidan McKito [*24], who is undergoing treatment for Hodgkin’s Lymphoma.
- For Darlene Lonardo, mother of Joseph Lonardo [*00], and grandmother of Angelina [*22] and Giana [*22] Lonardo, who is undergoing treatment for leukemia.
- For Christine Maharg, mother of Lily Maharg [*21], who is seriously ill with cancer.
- For Margaret Malarney [*24] who continues rehab and medical care.
- For Bernice Girgash, aunt of Basketball Coach and Counselor, Dan DeCrane, who is undergoing treatment for cancer..
- For Krishna Gupta, Sister of Science teacher, Neena Goel, aunt of Nikhil [*13] and Nupur [*17] Goel, who is undergoing treatment for a brain bleed
- For Karuna Singla, Sister-in-law of Science teacher, Neena Goel, aunt of Nikhil [*13] and Nupur [*17] Goel, who is undergoing treatment for bone cancer.
- For Melita Chiacchiari, mother of Mark [*94], mother-in-law of Michelle DeBacco [*96] who is undergoing further treatment for cancer.
- For Mike Heryak, husband of Janet, father of Lillian [*09], Rosa [*12] and Edwin [*17] Heryak, who is seriously ill
- For Tom Podnar, father of Lower School art teacher, Eileen Sheehan, who is awaiting a heart transplant.
- For Father James Caddy, former pastor of St. Francis, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.



NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, JAN. 5th:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, January 5th at 6:30 PM. Bible Study continues to meet bi-weekly. The Bible Study is open to everyone — all middle and high school students, college students, young adults, and all adults. We will all come together to be enriched by God’s word. It’s a great time, and a good witness of our faith to others. If you can’t come at 6:30, come when you can. Gather your favorite snack and/or drink, but be prepared to be nourished on God’s word. **Our topic for this Bible Study will be: The Christmas Feasts**



If you text or email Father John [blazekj@gilmour.org] he will send you the zoom link and password. This is an important step to prevent negative intruders.

We also need your help — we need future topics. **So, if you have a topic that you would like us to discuss, please let Father John know.** Mark your calendars and be part of this wonderful activity that will deepen your spiritual journey. **We will meet every other week — topic to be decided at the end of the previous meeting.** Join us. You’ll have a blast, and celebrate your faith along the way..

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Sunday, January 2: Epiphany	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, January 3:	NO MASS
Tuesday, January 4: Elizabeth Ann Seton	4:15 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Wednesday, January 5: John Neumann	NO MASS
Thursday, January 6: André Bassette	NO MASS
Friday, January 7:	4:15 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Saturday, January 8: Baptism of Jesus	NO MASS
Sunday, January 9: Baptism of Jesus	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream

R.C.I.A [Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults]:

Our RCIA program will begin shortly. If you have been thinking about investigating the Catholic faith, or if you know someone who has been thinking about it; if you have been away from the Catholic Church for a while, or are interested in learning more about the Catholic faith; if you know someone who is not fully initiated [Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation] in their Catholic faith — then consider joining or having them join our RCIA program.



GETTING THINGS RIGHT:

When my eyes fill with wonder and my heart with love or joy, I do not betray my concerns for the world — I nourish my capacity to attend to them.
—Kristi Nelson

REFLECTION ON THE THEME FOR THE WEEK:

The message of this Feast of the Epiphany is the revelation to people of all ages that each of us is a “manifestation” of the Christ ourselves. It is not so much what gifts we have to present to Jesus; rather, the question is: what gifts has God given us to reveal to others — some particular feature of God’s personality?

In the third Eucharistic Prayer, we ask God to allow Jesus to make us “an everlasting gift” to Him. Think about this — we are the receivers; yet Christ has come to make us gifts offered back to the Giver. What of God do we reveal? The Magi who visited Jesus [Matthew 2:1-12] left Jesus with this mission-sense. Jesus does not stay a child; nor in Bethlehem or Nazareth. To accept our “gifthood” is to accept our being-“givenhood” — and that will take much grace and time.

Secrets are exciting, and when one is shared with you, that energy changes to intimacy and a sense of being special. When the information becomes public and generally known, that specialness is dimmed. Israel had a long history of being intimate and special through their covenants made with God. While the covenants were not exactly secrets, the fact is that the “One God” was sharing with this one nation, information, or revelation of Who this “One God” was. Their history was a continuous intensification of their own image and the image of God for them. They were promised a Messiah and in the past weeks, we have heard of the miracles and fruitfulness which would accompany His arrival.

This secret is brought to light by the prophet Isaiah [60:1-6] when he foretells that this Messiah is going to be shared beyond the borders of Israel. The nation will still be special because people from the sea to the desert will come to visit the glory of God manifested in Jerusalem and Israel. The riches of other lands will come in recognition of the presence of a new brilliance which has shined upon this little place or spot of the earth. This — along with other prophecies — moves the secret more outward making the whole world bright and enlightened by the Light of this new revelation. God claims all people as special and as belonging to this “One God”.

Matthew’s Gospel presents Jesus as both the One Who is to come and the One who has come for all. The Magi represent the “beyond” or distant lands and peoples to whom the Christ will offer His universal wisdom. These “Wise Men” also represent the former ways of thinking, wondering, and philosophizing. They come in a sign of surrender to this new “epiphany” — or display of this “One God” Who is for all and is now known as the God Who does the seeking and the finding. The Magi are the figures of the world who did the seeking for and the finding of God. The Light is initiated by God and this Light is meant for the whole world.

As with the shepherds, these wise men continue in a liturgical manner. They arrive, having wandered in faith, have an offertory procession, a time of adoration and then a sending. Were they totally satisfied by the whole experience of stars, warnings, findings? They were somehow missioned by the encounter to go farther and further and deeper. Like the shepherds they were changed and yet returned to the desert-usual of life.

The gifts which the Magi had presented represented what had been valuable to these seekers who left them at the “house” and leave by “another way”. They have not so much found as they have been found and leave that place to begin the spreading the news of the Finder whom they found. This is all a grand ending and beginning. The Magi-story is the revelation that mere human wisdom searches for more than it can understand. The Wanderers, who have come from afar in distance and time, arrive, not at an idea or principle, but at the mystery of a Person. The Magi represent us as well.

**THE MYSTERY OF THE EPHIPHANY:**

In our reading of Scripture, it’s easy to forget that each of our writings was originally directed to a specific community at a specific time and place. Technically none of our sacred authors wrote anything for us — or else they would have written in modern English. That’s why, among other things, to properly understand Matthew’s gospel, we must understand the community for whom Matthew is writing. It’s no accident that our well-known narrative of the magi is found only in Matthew.

The reason is simple — he’s the only evangelist who writes for a Jewish/Christian church; the other three compose their gospels for Gentile Christians. Matthew’s original readers could be compared to modern Seventh Day Adventists — Christians who believe they’re still obligated to carry out many of the 613 Laws of Moses. For instance, they don’t eat pork and still regard Saturday, not Sunday, as their weekday holy day. Matthew’s community would have regarded themselves as Jews, but unlike the majority of their friends and relatives, Jews who bought into the reform Jesus of Nazareth taught and lived.

One of the most important messages Matthew directs to these Jewish Christians is that non-Jewish Christians can be just as good followers of Jesus as they are. As a matter of fact, the evangelist tells his readers that the first people to recognize the exceptionalism of the child Jesus were not only Gentiles, but Gentiles who were also devotees of astronomy — something totally forbidden for Jews to practice under penalty of death. Though Herod, the Jew, finds out from his Scripture scholars the name of the town in which the new king of the Jews is to be born, only non-Jews actually travel down from Jerusalem to Bethlehem to check out what these biblical experts promised they would find.

We know from the classic prophets like Isaiah [60:1-6] that centuries before the birth of Jesus, Jews had to deal with the part non-Jews would play in the history of salvation. But in most cases, God was simply expected to use these Gentiles to support Jews in their faith. Either they would convert to Judaism — and therefore cease being non-Jews — or enrich Jews by “bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the Lord.”

That’s quite different from what Gentile/Christians did. Without converting to Judaism, they became part of God’s new Chosen People on an equal level with Jews. The disciple of Paul responsible for the letter to the at Ephesus [3:2-6] expresses this belief in black and white terms — “The Gentiles are co-heirs, members of the same body, and co-partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” In the eyes of God, there’s absolutely no difference between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. Matthew was convinced that his community needed to hear this from various angles — even magi angles. Many in the evangelist’s church still had to die to themselves in order to fully accept this truth. Perhaps that’s why the magi’s third gift to Jesus is myrrh. We can understand why they offer this new-born king gold and frankincense. But what’s with the myrrh?

My old Scripture professor, Dr. Irvin Arkin, frequently asked what we would think if we opened a birthday gift and found a bottle of embalming fluid! That no doubt would put a damper on the celebration. Yet Arkin hit the nail on the head — at the time of Jesus myrrh was frequently used to anoint dead bodies. Matthew is telling us that dying is always part of our experience of the risen Jesus — especially when we’re called upon to accept others as equal to ourselves — others whom we’ve traditionally looked upon as being inferior.

—taken from the writings of Father Roger Karban, which appear on the internet

STAY FOCUSED:

Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit. Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever — even if your whole world seems upset.

—St. Francis de Sales

STARTING THE NEW YEAR IN HOPE:

It probably is safe to say that most of us are entering this new year a little apprehensive. After all, these last few years with COVID haven't been what we all have anticipated. Perhaps you're feeling a bit disillusioned, a little low on hope, running out of steam for your life.

As Christians, however, we have the key to maintaining an attitude of hope even if all our external circumstances declare the opposite. That key is Jesus. Jesus Christ is our hope, and in Him we can place our trust. What better time than the New Year to recommit ourselves to the perspective of wisdom rather than the opinion of the world? Here are some helps to enable you to reignite your hope in 2022:



1. **Read Scripture and the lives of the Saints.** If there is ever a story of hope to inspire you, it's the Story of Salvation History that God has written since the beginning of time. If you need a reminder of the faithfulness and providence of God, read the Bible. Need a place to start? Read the stories of Abraham and Joseph in Genesis. Additionally, the lives of the Saints are brimming with tales of hope in the face of despair. Let these stories buoy you up!
2. **Remember what God has done in the past.** When has God come through for you in the past? In big ways or small ways? By remembering how hope has not disappointed us in the past, we strengthen our spiritual muscles for whatever discouragement we are currently facing.
3. **Ask the Holy Spirit for help.** Hope is a theological virtue, which means that we simply cannot have it with or apart from God. We can't manufacture hope. We can't fake true hope. Hope is not reliance upon ourselves. It is a gift, and one that can only be enjoyed through and with God. So ask God for more of it!
4. **Participate in the Prayer Pledge.** What is the Prayer Pledge. It's a commitment to dedicate the first day of every month of the year to prayer in the hopes that this habit will continue throughout the remainder of the year. Prayer is the basis for hope. Take time at the beginning of each month to pray and meditate. It's a great way to start.

When your life scream anything but hope, may you find in yourself the faith of Abraham who hoped

CHAPEL ENVELOPES:

Over the course of COVID-19, many people have been mailing in donations to the chapel. Now that we have begun to assemble again, many are also looking to replace their envelope supply. We really appreciate this, as our collections are obviously way down. **If you would like us to send you a supply of envelopes, please call Father John or Patty at [473-3560], and we will get them right out to you..**

WEEKLY OFFERING:

Thank you to those who have begun to send in weekly offerings. We really appreciate it. Here are the offerings that we have received throughout **the week prior to July 18-19.** Thanks for not forgetting about us.

Offerings-----[Friday, December 24]-----[Christmas Eve]----- \$ 1,015.00
 Offerings-----[Saturday, December 25]-----[Christmas Day] ----- \$ 530.00
 Offerings-----[Sunday, December 26]----- \$ 35.00

RUN THE RACE:

Teach us to remember the little courtesies — to be swift to speak the grateful and happy word, to believe rejoicingly in each other's best, and to face all life bravely because we face it with united heart.

—Walter Russell Bowie

We would like to think of God, arrive at our own logical, reasonable concept of God. We would love to say that we have found God. If we determine Who and What God is, then we would seem to control God. God would have to act accordingly. In prostrating themselves, the Magi admit their former human arrogance and surrender to the truth that until then, they had not been satisfied with the conclusions of their personal ponderings.

The Epiphany is a grand revelation that God will not be found to satisfy human thinking. This seeking of us by God encourages us to live with the dissatisfactions of our hearts. Jesus has come among us and within us to accompany our spirits and not merely to quench the thirsts of thought. We are invited to lay down our intellects, as precious gold, which they are. We, like the Magi, pick up our lives which have been met, found and sent off, the better for the finding.

It can be assumed that, as with the shepherds before them, the Magi went back by “another way” — not merely geographically. They return to a new and different way of relating with life. Their hearts and spirits are comforted and their minds, still turning these things over in wonder, continue the journey of exploring the possibilities. The seeking is God's labor, the being found is ours. For us finding is less lively than seeking. When we hear that we should seek and we shall find, what Jesus and the Magi teach us is that human finding will always lead to some kind of dissatisfaction and so the seeking re-begins.

The Magi did not stay at the place to which the star guided them. Nobody who came to find Jesus — from the shepherds to those seeking Him within the tomb — were ever allowed just to stay nice and close to Him, the finder. He moved them along in their human-heart search. What a holy way to journey.

—taken from the writings of Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet

RADIATE AND REVEAL GOD'S SPLENDOR:

Fr. Hans Urs von Balthasar [1905-1984] was a Swiss Catholic theologian who had a deep interest in the concept of beauty and glory as those terms relate to the mystery of God. In what does beauty consist? How are we to understand the glory of God? The writings of this prolific theologian fill 14 volumes.

The Feast of the Epiphany might well be renamed “Feast of Beauty” or the “Feast of the Glory of God.” Our scriptural readings speak powerfully of how God is manifested in history. Just note the language referring to beauty and glory: “We observed a star” [Matthew 2:1-12]; “Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you”; “over you appears his glory” [Isaiah 60:1-6]; “God's secret plan was revealed to me” [Ephesians 3:2-6]. All of this language points us in the direction of God's beauty.

Jesus is the revelation and manifestation of the glory of God. Here is how Fr. James Bacik interprets Fr. Hans Urs von Balthasar's understanding of Jesus: “Jesus is the most integrated of human beings because His whole being and purpose is to be a vehicle of divine grace and the epiphany of the Father's love. Through the life and death of the Word made Flesh, ‘the true God is heard, seen and touched.’ As a genuine man, Christ is ‘the perfection of creatureliness’ and ‘the archetype’ of fulfilled humanity. As the Word Incarnate, Jesus radiates the glory of the Father and the light of the Holy Spirit. As the God-man, Jesus is the inner norm of history and the unique source of ultimate meaning.”

Our culture is not friendly to a contemplative spirit that recognizes God's glory in our daily lives. We tend to live a hurried, non-reflective existence; we lack a broad vision because our age is one of specialization; we stress doing and activism at the expense of a quiet receptivity. Our liturgy invites us to gaze lovingly upon the person of Jesus, and to ponder God's secret plan of salvation that comes through Christ to all the nations. Our personal prayer creates space for God's word to be heard as it touches our lives and calls for an obedient response.

It is somewhat audacious of the Church to celebrate all this glory and light in the dead of winter. It is rather bold to proclaim all this splendor and radiance in a world filled with war and suffering. It is close to arrogance to claim that “all will be well” because of the coming of Jesus. Yet that is exactly what we do. Our faith in a God who is true to his promises gives us the courage to not only see beauty and glory in the messiness of human history, but also the faith to be agents of God's glory and beauty by being light and salt to the world.

—taken from the writings of Bishop Robert Morneau, auxiliary Bishop of Green Bay

A REFLECTION ON THE EPIPHANY BY POPE FRANCIS:

The word “Epiphany” indicates the manifestation of the Lord, who, as Saint Paul tells us “makes himself known to all the nations” [Ephesians 3:2-6] — represented by the Magi. In this way, we see revealed the glory of a God who has come for everyone — every nation, language and people is welcomed and loved by him. It is symbolized by the light, which penetrates and illumines all things.

Yet if our God makes himself known for everyone, it is even more surprising how he does so. Matthew’s Gospel speaks of a hum of activity around the palace of King Herod once Jesus appears as a king. The Magi ask: “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?” [Matthew 2:1-12]. They will find him, but not where they thought — not in the royal palace of Jerusalem, but in a humble abode in Bethlehem. We saw this same paradox at Christmas. The Gospel spoke of the census of the entire world taken in the days of the Emperor Augustus, when Quirinius was governor [see Luke 2:1-14]. But none of the great men of that time realized that the King of history was being born in their own time. Again, when Jesus — some thirty years of age — made himself known publicly, preceded by John the Baptist, the Luke’s Gospel once more solemnly situates the event, listing all the “magnates” of the time, the great secular and spiritual powers — Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate, Herod, Philip, Lysanias, the high priests Annas and Caiaphas [see Luke 3]. And it concludes by saying that, at that time, “the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness” — to none of the magnates, but to a man who had withdrawn to the desert. Here is the surprise: God does not need the spotlights of the world to make himself known.

When we listen to that list of distinguished personages, we might be tempted to turn the spotlight on them. We might think that it would have been better had the star of Jesus appeared in Rome, on the Palatine Hill, where Augustus ruled over the world; then the whole empire would immediately have become Christian. Or if it had shone on the palace of Herod, he might have done good rather than evil. But God’s light does not shine on those who shine with their own light. God “proposes” himself; he does not “impose” himself. He illumines; he does not blind. It is always a very tempting to confuse God’s light with the lights of the world. How many times have we pursued the seductive lights of power and celebrity, convinced that we are rendering good service to the Gospel! But by doing so, have we not turned the spotlight on the wrong place, because God was not there. His kindly light shines forth in humble love. How many times too, have we, as a Church, attempted to shine with our own light! Yet we are not the sun of humanity — we are the moon that, despite its shadows, reflects the true light, which is the Lord.

The light of God shines on those who receive it [Isaiah 60:1-6]. The light does not prevent the darkness and the thick clouds from covering the earth, but shines forth on those prepared to accept it. And so, the prophet addresses a challenging summons to everyone: “Arise, shine”. We need to arise, to get up from our sedentary lives and prepare for a journey. Otherwise, we stand still — like the scribes that Herod consulted. They knew very well where the Messiah was born, but they did not move. We also need to shine, to be clothed in God who is light, day by day, until we are fully clothed in Jesus. Yet to be clothed in God, who like the light is simple, we must first put aside our pretentious robes. Otherwise, we will be like Herod, who preferred the earthly lights of success and power to the divine light. The Magi, instead, fulfil the prophecy. They arise and shine, and are clothed in light. They alone see the star in the heavens: not the scribes, nor Herod, nor any of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

In order to find Jesus, we also need to take a different route, to follow a different path — his path, the path of humble love. And we have to persevere. Matthew’s Gospel ends by saying that the Magi, after encountering Jesus “left for their own country by another road” — another road, different from that of Herod. An alternative route than that of the world — like the road taken by those who surround Jesus at



few equals. His skills are a graceful power for which he is much admired and envied. The third person is a rock star whose music and charisma can electrify an audience and fill a room with a soulful energy. Her face is on billboards and she is a household name. That’s still another kind of power. Finally, we have, too, in the room a newborn, a baby, lying in its crib, seemingly without any power or strength whatsoever, unable to even ask for what it needs. Which of these is ultimately the most powerful?

The irony is that the baby ultimately wields the greatest power. The athlete could crush it, the dictator could kill it, and the rock star could out-glow it in sheer dynamism, but the baby has a different kind of power. It can touch hearts in a way that a dictator, an athlete, or a rock star cannot. Its innocent, wordless presence, without physical strength, can transform a room and a heart in a way that guns, muscle, and charisma cannot. We watch our language and actions around a baby — less so around athletes and rock stars. The powerlessness of a baby touches us at a deeper moral place.

And this is the way we find and experience God’s power here on earth — sometimes to our great frustration. And this is the way that Jesus was deemed powerful during his lifetime. All the Gospels make this clear, from beginning to end. Jesus was born as a baby, powerless, and he died hanging helplessly on a cross with bystanders mocking his powerlessness. Yet both his birth and his death manifest the kind of power upon which we can ultimately build our lives.

The Gospels describe Jesus’ power and authority in exactly this way. In Greek, the original language of the Gospels, we find three words for power or authority. We easily recognize the first two — energy and dynamic. There is a power in energy, in physical health and muscle, just as there is a power in being dynamic, in dynamite, in having the power to generate energy; but when the Gospels speak of Jesus as “having great power” and as having a power beyond that of other religious figures, they do not use the words energetic or dynamic. They use a third word — “exousia”— which might be best rendered as vulnerability. Jesus’ real power was rooted in a certain vulnerability — like the powerlessness of a child.

This isn’t an easy concept to grasp since our idea of power is normally rooted in the opposite — namely, the notion that power lies in the ability to overwhelm, not underwhelm, others. And yet we understand this, at least somewhat, in our experience of babies, who can overpower us precisely by their powerlessness. Around a baby, as most every mother and father has learned, we not only watch our language and try not to have bitter arguments; we also try to be better, more loving persons. Metaphorically, a baby has the power to do an exorcism. It can cast out the demons of self-absorption and selfishness in us. That’s why Jesus could cast out certain demons that others could not.

And that’s how God’s power forever lies within our world and within our lives, asking for our patience. Christ, as Annie Dillard says, is always found in our lives just as he was originally found, a helpless baby in the straw who must be picked up and nurtured into maturity. But we are forever wanting something else — namely, a God who would come and clean up the world and satisfy our thirst for justice by showing some raw muscle power and banging some heads here and now.

We are impatient with quiet, moral power that demands infinite patience and a long-term perspective. We want a hero, someone with the blazing guns of a Hollywood superhero but the heart of a Mother Theresa. The guns of the world blasting away evil - that’s what we want from our God — not the power of a baby lying mute and helpless against the cruel powers of our time. Like the Israelites facing the Philistines, we are reluctant to send a shepherd boy against an ironclad giant [see 1 Samuel 17]. We want divine power in iron, muscles, guns, and charisma.

But that’s not the way intimacy, peace, and God are found.

—taken from the writings of Father Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., which appear on the internet



Scripture study — Bethlehem of Judah was the designated birthplace for the ruler who would shepherd Israel.

In what sounds like a comic twist, the Magi — whose quest had already taken them more than 1,000 kilometers — heard Herod ask them to “search diligently for the child.” Of course, he did so only for malevolent purposes. But because they were God-seekers, the Magi were too attentive to signs from heaven to end up being accomplices to Herod’s evil.

There is no doubt that this is a great story and that it adds a wonderful diversity of costumes and exotic animals to our Nativity scenes. But what else are we to take from it?

Of all the evangelists, only Matthew — the one who wrote most directly for a Jewish audience — tells us about the Magi. Whereas Luke, who wrote for a broader public, highlighted the Jewish characters of the shepherds and the elders Anna and Simeon in Jesus’ birth story, Matthew spotlighted foreigners, people with no awareness of the faith and promises of Abraham. Thus, Matthew reminds his readers that they are a “chosen people” so that they would become, as Isaiah said, a light to the nations. Israel’s centrality in the divine plan was all about their vocation to make God known to the whole world.

This Feast is entitled: Epiphany — Revelation of the Lord. The truly tragic irony in Matthew’s story was that pilgrim pagans journeyed far from home because they believed God was doing something new, while the leaders of the chosen people read their scriptures, but no longer expected God to reveal anything new. The religious leaders of Jesus’ day had worked out an uneasy but relatively peaceful accommodation with the Roman Empire. Rome allowed the clergy to function as long as they did not rock the boat; therefore, the Jewish people enjoyed some degree of freedom to practice their religion. In today’s terms, they were living in something between accommodation and complicity.

The Magi, on the other hand, intuited something that awakened their dreams enough to shake them out of a settled existence. They may not have had the promises of Abraham or a sense of the God of Israel, but they did believe that life could be more than what they already knew where they were. Without knowing details, they believed in a God of revelation.

As we begin this new year, the Magi might be inviting us too to read the stars — to look for epiphanies of God among us and to allow mystery to shake us out of our status quo and beyond the borders of our comfortable relationships and thought patterns. In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis invites us to learn from COVID-19’s vivid demonstration of our intimate connectedness across the Earth [see #126-128]. Francis calls on us to establish effective networks of international relations of solidarity — something that could be a specialty of the worldwide Catholic Church.

Like the Magi, we may not know exactly what we are looking for, but if we set our sights high enough, God will not hesitate to lead us into new epiphanies where we will meet God among us in unexpected and wildly rich ways. —taken from the writings of Sister Mary McGlone, C.S.J., which appear on the internet

THE POWER OF POWERLESSNESS:

There are different kinds of power and different kinds of authority. There is military power, muscle power, political power, economic power, moral power, charismatic power, and psychological power, among other things. There are different kinds of authority too: We can be bitterly forced into acquiescing to certain demands or we can be gently persuaded into accepting them. Power and authority are not all of a kind.

Imagine four persons in a room. The first is a powerful dictator who rules a country. His word commands armies and his shifting moods intimidate subordinates. He wields a brutal power. Next to him sits a gifted athlete at the peak of his physical prowess — a man whose quickness and strength have



Christmas — Mary and Joseph, the shepherds. Like the Magi, they left home and became pilgrims on the paths of God. For only those who leave behind their worldly attachments and undertake a journey find the mystery of God.

This holds true for us too. It is not enough to know where Jesus was born, as the scribes did, if we do not go there. It is not enough to know that Jesus was born, like Herod, if we do not encounter him. When his place becomes our place, when his time becomes our time, when his person becomes our life, then the prophecies come to fulfillment in us. Then Jesus is born within us. He becomes the living God for me. Today we are asked to imitate the Magi. They do not debate — they set out. They do not stop to look, but enter the house of Jesus. They do not put themselves at the center, but bow down before the One who is the center. They do not remain glued to their plans, but are prepared to take other routes. Their actions reveal a close contact with the Lord, a radical openness to him, a total engagement with him. With him, they use the language of love, the same language that Jesus, though an infant, already speaks. Indeed, the Magi go to the Lord not to receive, but to give. Let us ask ourselves this question: at Christmas did we bring gifts to Jesus for his party, or did we only exchange gifts among ourselves?

If we went to the Lord empty-handed, today we can remedy that. The Gospel, in some sense, gives us a little “gift list” — gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold, the most precious of metals, reminds us God has to be granted first place; he has to be worshiped. But do that, we need to remove ourselves from the first place and to recognize our neediness, the fact that we are not self-sufficient. Then there is frankincense, which symbolizes a relationship with the Lord, prayer, which like incense rises up to God [see Psalm 141]. Just as incense must burn in order to yield its fragrance, so too, in prayer, we need to “burn” a little of our time, to spend it with the Lord. Not just in words, but also by our actions. We see this in the myrrh, the ointment that would be lovingly used to wrap the body of Jesus taken down from the cross [see John 19:39]. The Lord is pleased when we care for bodies racked by suffering, the flesh of the vulnerable, of those left behind, of those who can only receive without being able to give anything material in return. Precious in the eyes of God is mercy shown to those who have nothing to give back. Gratuitousness! Gratuitousness is precious in God’s eyes.

In this Christmas season now drawing to its close, let us not miss the opportunity to offer a precious gift to our King, who came to us not in worldly pomp, but in the luminous poverty of Bethlehem. If we can do this, his light will shine upon us.

—Pope Francis

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — JANUARY 15th:

Our Savior Lutheran Church, across the street from Gilmour, has a Food Pantry which distributes food to the community on **the third Saturday of each month**. They welcome volunteers. If you want to volunteer, they have instituted some **new procedures** because of the Coronavirus. **Thus they help pre-pack nonperishables in bags on Thursday evening beginning at 5 PM.** They continue this prepacking on Friday if needed. Check with Elina Gurney on this. **On Saturday morning at 9 AM, they need help putting items from the foodbank into the prepacked bags.** Only volunteers will be allowed in the Church building, so you will be protected against the virus. Clients will remain outside in their cars. **The food pantry is then open from 9:30 AM—1:30 PM on Saturday.**

Our Savior Lutheran’s Food Pantry was formed to serve those in emergency situations and/or with on-going need in the cities of Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, Highland Heights and Gates Mills. The Food Pantry respects social and cultural diversity and upholds the worth and dignity of those it serves. All those in the area with need will be served equally, as supplies allow. The food pantry is a member of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank.

Please let Elina Gurney know if you would like to help. You can do this through the chapel office [440-473-3560] or by emailing Elina Gurney at gurney.oh@gmail.com. In this critical time, this is a wonderful way to serve others. Please consider this opportunity.



LIVING GOLD, FRANKINCENSE, AND MYRRH:

The most foundational truth of the Christian life can be located in Matthew's gospel, but it is a lesson that we often miss. We miss it because we are not looking in the right place. In the gospel [Matthew 2:1-12], it is difficult to keep your eyes off of the wise men. They are foreign and mysterious. They come from the East in their exotic robes, riding their peculiar camels, following the star. But when we focus on the wise men, the theme of the gospel is about searching, finding, and the giving of gifts. These themes, however, are not the deepest truth of today's feast. To find that truth we must not look at what the wise men do, but at what Jesus does. And what does Jesus do? He receives the gifts that the wise men offer. This action is arguably the first action of Jesus ever recorded in the gospels — to accept the gifts that are given. It is an action of profound significance, because it is an illustration of what is most fundamental about the Christian life — that being a Christian is not about what we do, but what we accept; it is not about giving but about receiving.

Now this is a difficult lesson for us to learn because we persist in the misconception that our faith is primarily about us, about what we do or what we fail to do. But our faith is not primarily about what we do, but rather about what God does. God has made us and saved us. God's actions are the actions that are at the heart of the gospel. Therefore, the stance of a Christian is primarily a stance of openness — a stance of receptivity. It is only when we can receive the gift that God offers that we know what salvation is truly about.

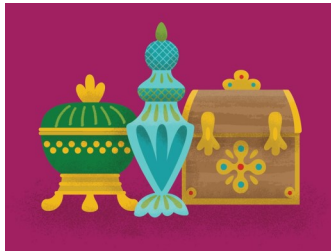
So what is it that we are called to receive? The three gifts help here — gold, frankincense, myrrh — value, mystery, pain. The first gift is the gift of gold, a gift of great value and worth. It points to the value and worth of our own lives. We are persons of great worth. God has made us so. God has instilled in us a dignity that is a part of who we are. That dignity is nothing we can earn and nothing that we can lose by failure or sin. We are called, then, to believe in our worth and dignity even when we doubt ourselves, even when we mess things up. The value and worth of our own being is the first gift that God gives us. We must be willing to receive it, if we are to be followers of Christ.

The gift of frankincense is a mysterious perfume, and it points to the mysterious action of God in our lives. God has a plan. God has a plan for us and for the world. God is always working to unfold that plan through all the relationships and opportunities of our lives. Our life is much more than the decisions we make, the plans that we form. Beneath our actions and our decisions is the mysterious impulse of God, blessing us, changing us, leading us forward. It is a mystery we cannot control. We can only accept it and cooperate with it. That mysterious presence of God's loving action in our life is the second gift which God offers us. We must receive it, if we are to understand the gospel.

Myrrh is the ointment of death, and it points to the unavoidable pain which is a part of all of our lives. None of us can avoid evil or pain, whether that comes from hurt, rejection, failure, sickness, or grief. But in faith we believe that such pain, as real and as deep as it is, cannot negate our worth and dignity as people. Nor can it frustrate or derail the mysterious plan of God that somehow moves forward despite all that opposes it. Pain in our life is unavoidable, but the reality of that pain need not destroy us. Believing that God's plan will succeed even in the presence of pain is the third gift that God offers us. We must be willing to receive it, if we are to understand the gospel.

Being a faithful Christian is not about doing — it is about receiving. This is why the first action of Jesus in the gospels is to receive the gifts of the wise men. Jesus receives gold, frankincense, and myrrh to remind us that we need to receive the value of our own person, the mystery of God's action in our life, and the reality that pain and evil cannot stop the plan of God. Those are three gifts we need to receive, for it is only by accepting them that we can follow Christ and fulfill the promise of Christmas.

—taken from the writings of Father George Smiga, which appear on the internet



We can enter deep submersibles and see underwater animals that have never reached the surface. Diseases like small pox and polio are distant, bad memories. We struggle now with COVID, but that too will probably become just a bad memory. We are convinced that we can find ways to ensure peace and happiness for everyone. We are convinced that we are wise. But we have forgotten the child.

This feast leads us to ask ourselves about our own attitudes in life. Are we really searching for God? Do we really want to find him? That is a very important question, because finding God necessitates changes in our lives. I am reminded of the Confessions of St. Augustine. Augustine wrote that before his conversion he practiced every kind of immorality. He did not want to convert to Christianity because he was afraid he might take it too seriously. He figured he would probably end up forcing himself to change his ways, and he did not want to do that.

Every experience of God demands a change in the status quo of our lives. If on Christmas we feel drawn closer to the Lord, then we have to refine our lives so we can enjoy his presence. If we are not willing to come closer to Christ, then Christmas is just a week full of empty sentiment.

Jesus is calling all of us to come before his presence. This presence is not just in Bethlehem, but in the many places of our everyday lives. His is present in the members of our family who are hurting, depressed or going through difficult times in their lives. He is present in all who are struggling to get by in difficult times. He is present in each of us as we stop to listen to our consciences rather than just go with our emotions.

“The wise still seek him,” the Christmas cards say. If we really want the Lord in our lives, we will continue the search — the journey towards a new experience of his presence.

—taken from the writings of Monsignor Joseph Pellegrino which appear on the internet

CHILDREN'S BULLETINS:

Each week, we are making available a **Children's Worship Bulletin**. There are **two editions: [3-6] and [7-12]**. They are available on the table as you leave. The Bulletin focuses on the readings for the week. These are wonderful tools for your children to learn more about the scripture readings for the week. We hope you will take them for your families or your grandchildren. Thanks.

**LOOK FOR GOD AMONG US:**

Humanity has long been fascinated with the heavens — especially the night sky. Abraham saw the promise of untold progeny in the stars [see Genesis 15]. According to some folklorists: “Follow the Drinking Gourd” was an Underground Railroad anthem, helping escaping slaves orient themselves by the Big Dipper and North Star. Then of course we have Matthew's Gospel about the holy people lured by a star to an encounter with the child Jesus [Matthew 2:1-12].

It's not unusual to hear people try to prove or disprove the existence of that star and the Magi's visit. That's one way of trying to deal with the truth of the Scriptures. But the very fact that the seekers were following a star hints that the mystery of this story is far richer than any factual data we might be able to produce.

Matthew's tale begins with the Magi — a name which designates the sky-gazing pilgrims as religious people who read the signs of the times via the stars. Although Matthew mentions their three gifts, he says nothing about how many participated in what could have been a whole caravan.

Following the theme of the heavens, the Magi came “from the rising of the sun” — the east. Their interpretation of the stars told them that a “king of the Jews” had been born. Unwisely, the pilgrims decided to consult the current ruler — the notorious King Herod. In a tragically ironic twist, Herod turned to local theologians to ask where a Messiah would be born. Culpably incurious about the signs of their times and what God was up to among them, the religious leaders simply reported the results of their

THE WISE SEEK HIM:

As we celebrate this Feast of Epiphany, we are presented a contrast — pagan astrologers who are seeking, and leaders of the Temple who think they already have found. The pagan astrologers were searching. They were on a journey of life. They were looking for truth in the world. They saw a star rising — or at least in a position in the heavens where they had never seen a star before. They believed that some god somewhere was trying to announce something through that star. So they continued the journey of their lives by following the star. They grew in faith as they traveled. When they first arrived in Jerusalem, they looked for a political figure who was the King of the Jews. That is why they went to Herod. When they arrived at the house where Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were staying, they fell down in worship. They were the first gentiles to have an experience of the presence of the Messiah. Their journey of life — their journey to God — was complete. They were sincere in the search. They were wise men.

The scholars in the Temple who devoted their lives to the Sacred Word and traditions of the Jewish people were not so wise. They knew that the Messiah was coming. This was foretold in Scripture. They even knew that he was coming to Bethlehem. But the political mood was such that it just was not a good time for a Messiah. They were motivated by the events of the world instead of the search for God. As a result, they missed entering into the presence of the Messiah.

In 1915, G. K. Chesterton, wrote a wonderful essay on three modern wise men. These three heard that there was a city of peace — a city where there would never be wars or disturbances. The men wanted to live in that city, but to do so, they had to pass a test — they had to present themselves at the gates of the city with gifts to demonstrate that they belonged there because they were men who would ensure the continual peace of the city.

So they journeyed to this wondrous city with what, they were sure, would be gifts that would guarantee peace and earn them admission into the city. When they got to the gates of the city, St. Joseph was there to judge their gifts. The first modern wise man brought gold. He suggested that money was the root of all wars. With the gold that he brought, people could buy all the pleasures of the world

and have no need to fight. He was convinced that gold would bring peace. The second modern wise man did not bring frankincense. He brought chemistry. He brought modern science. With his science he could drug the minds of people into a state of perpetual bliss. With his chemistry, he could seed the soil and control the population. People would then have all that they would need so they would never go to war again. The story was developed to present the third modern wise man

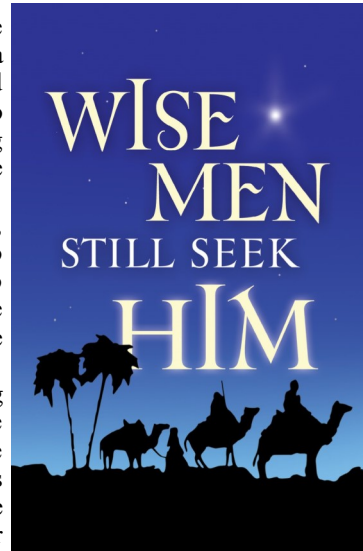
bringing a split atom — a new myrrh, a new symbol of death. His message was that anyone who opposed the way of peace would face death. This wise man was the father of nuclear deterrence.

After they showed him their gifts, St. Joseph refused to let any of them enter.

"What more could we have brought to demonstrate that we are men of peace," they protested. "We carry with us means to provide affluence, control nature and destroy enemies." St. Joseph whispered something into the ear of each man. Then they turned and went away with heavy hearts.

Do you know what St. Joseph told each of them? He told them that they had forgotten the child.

With all our technology, with all our affluence, with the power we have shown to dominate many forces of nature, we moderns are convinced that we are wise. The air no longer holds us to the ground. We can fly in it. The atmosphere no longer holds us to the earth. We can fly through it to the moon and beyond. The depths of the sea are no longer mysteries. We can put on scuba gear and swim like the fish.

**ALL IS DIFFERENT; BUT YET THE SAME:**

Several months before the birth of our oldest daughter, I was gifted a book. It was one of those “Here’s what you need to know to be a decent parent” books. It was supposed to be funny. Its basic premise was this: Life will never be the same; hope you soaked up the good times while you had the chance.

I hated it.

Obviously, life changes when a new person is introduced into the equation — particularly a minutes-old infant. But this idea that my life would no longer be mine to live, that all the things I enjoyed and valued in the present would be cast aside, that my life might actually become demonstrably worse was not a particularly uplifting treatise of pre-baby advice.

Maybe I didn’t get the jokes. Maybe that book was right. Maybe my life as I knew it was over.

That wasn’t to be the case. We quickly absorbed our little girl into the regular ebbs and flows of our lives. She attended wedding after wedding that first year and had visited more Baltimore breweries before reaching 12 months than many of our friends have after reaching 30 years. Life was radically, unimaginably different, but in most ways, life was very much the same. Life was no longer ours to live for ourselves. Life continued to be our own unique journey of self-discovery.

Paradox is rampant throughout the Christian story — death means new life; a virgin gives birth; the last are first. Why should our own entry into the long and winding tale be any different?

Here we are in the week after Christmas; That other baby — Jesus — is just a few days old. And how do we feel with this new life in our lives? We wring our hands and bite our lips and convince ourselves that our lives are utterly different and transformed and no longer ours, but God’s — that’s the fruit of our Advent journey! Nothing can be the same!

True enough. And yet, maybe we don’t feel that way. Maybe Christmas came and went — as did the boxes of presents and the browning tree and the house full of in-laws and the extra desserts — and we feel tired but the same. That little baby has been quickly and completely absorbed into our lives, and we’re desperate to find some daycare.

Here’s the thing — ours is a God of both/and, a God that shatters into pieces unhelpful either/or dichotomies.

Our life can be the same because Jesus meets us here, now, in our lives. He’s been here the whole time, after all; he has a good sense of how things work. Love Incarnate desires to walk with us along our well-trod paths like an old friend. Welcome Christ into who you actually, authentically are, not some imagined spiritual guru you’ve not yet become.

At the same time, our lives are different. Christ is born anew in us every time we turn back to and embrace God’s desire for our lives and our world, every time we allow that same Love Incarnate to be manifested in our own daily lives. Our lives aren’t ours — all is gift and all is God’s. That’s a radical reorientation of our day.

So, in this week where that baby Jesus is taking long naps, keeping his parents up through the nights and learning just what this great big world has to offer, imagine all it means to welcome this new life — Christ desires a radical reorientation of the axis around which your life revolves; and, at the same time, Christ desires to sink deeply into the life you already and authentically live.

—taken from the writings of Eric Clayton, which appear on the internet.

LIFE TOGETHER:

The greatest gift I have to offer is my own joy of living, my own inner peace, my own silence and solitude, my own sense of well-being. When I ask myself: “Who helps me the most?” I must answer: “The one who is willing to share his or her life with me.”

—Henri Nouwen

THEY SHOWED UP, THEY WORSHIPPED, THEY BROUGHT GIFTS:

With the Feast of Epiphany upon us, once again our attention stays on Jesus, but shifts to that of how the Magi — or “wise men” — worshipped the Baby King of Kings. So, let’s dig a little deeper and take a look at the “other kings” — 3 of them, to be exact.

First, let’s remember that Scripture [Matthew 2:1-12] does not say that there were 3 Magi — it only lists 3 gifts! As with a lot of things, the modern understanding of “the 3 wise men” comes from tradition — small “T”. Actually it goes back to about the 8th century. As for “how many were there really”? We don’t know for sure. So, let’s go with tradition.

The names of the magi are commonly held to be **Gaspar, Melchior** and **Balthazar**. Though, no one knows for sure, it was Venerable Bede [672-735] who filled in the details on the wise men believing, basically:

- **Melchior** was an older man, with a long white beard and white hair, who brought gold to the King.
- **Gaspar** was shown as younger, beardless and “ruddy” [reddish haired], who offered incense to Christ.
- **Balthazar** was depicted as a middle aged man of black complexion, with a heavy beard, who offered myrrh to Jesus.

Medieval legends state that their bones were put in the cathedral of Cologne — the “City of the Three Kings” — brought there in 1164.

Originally they were considered and depicted as astrologers, but in about the Middle Ages or so, the interpretation began to take on more of “kings”. Some traditions hold that St. Thomas the apostle visited them later on in life, catechized and initiated them fully into the Christian faith, and that they later were ordained priests and bishops.

Regardless of whether or not that actually happened, the gifts they presented to the Christ Child are of significance for several reasons:

- **Gold** for the royalty of Jesus
- **Frankincense** for the divinity of Jesus
- **Myrrh** for the humanity — passion and death — of Jesus

And what does all this mean to us in the 21st century? Basically — they showed up, worshipped Jesus and brought their gifts. Do you do all three? If not, why not? And if so, keep it up. If the truth hurts — the truth will set you free.

Be God’s. Happy Epiphany.

—The Bible Geek



READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

- Monday:** 1 John 3:22-4:6, Matthew 4:12-25
- Tuesday:** 1 John 4:7-10, Mark 6:34-44
- Wednesday:** 1 John 4:11-18, Mark 6:45-52
- Thursday:** 1 John 4:19-5:4, Luke 4:14-22
- Friday:** 1 John 5:5-13, Luke 5:12-16
- Saturday:** 1 John 5:14-21, John 3:22-30

The Baptism of Jesus: Isaiah 42:1-7, Acts 10:34-38, Luke 3:15-22

LIFE TEEN and EDGE:

Our Life Teen and EDGE youth group is meeting in-person again. We will meet for an hour beginning at 11:30 AM following our 10 AM Sunday Mass in the Lennon Board



Room. If you are unable to join us, there are many resources available for you on the Life Teen website — lifeteen.com. There are numerous blogs and videos for you to connect with. The Life Teen national office continues to release many new programs. Please contact Father John for more information. And please join us each Sunday for our Mass at 10 AM — in person or live-streamed, and then come to our Life Teen/EDGE gathering after Mass. And above all, let us continue to join each other in prayer. Father

John is available for you. Please contact him [cell: 216-570-9276].



REVELATION OF THE MAGI:

When I walked into the hospital room that evening, there was Zoe, all wrapped up in a bundle of sleeping beauty, having been born only a few hours prior. She was laying on the hospital bed, lights subdued, soft music playing in the background, with her parents cooing above. I was invited to meet my goddaughter, her mom lifting the sleeping baby, and gently placing her in my arms for the first time. I sat down on a nearby chair, and all I could do was stare in silence, and whisper in prayer my commitment to be the best godfather I could possibly be for her. Zoe’s godmother — a budding photographer — took many photos of that first meeting — one that I recall with great joy.

Maybe the best way I can understand the story of the Visit of the Magi is to recall the day Zoe was born. Maybe this is one of many providential reasons why I was asked to be Zoe’s godfather, but also to have been invited to come so quickly to the hospital that cold night in November 2011. Maybe all the Scriptural commentaries I’ve read can help an intellectual understanding of the event, but no academic effort could have prepared me for what my heart felt as I walked into the hospital room. I understood the reason why there was a pervasive silence in that room, it wasn’t that Zoe was asleep. Rather, it was a reverential awe — an homage — of the mystery that I was walking into: the miracle of birth.



While I had not gold, frankincense, or myrrh, and while my introduction was not a one-time affair, I have learned how to “open up my treasure” — my availability and company — for that little one by way of pushing her on the swing, gifts for her birthday, walks through the neighborhood, surprise visits and “dates with godpoppa,” and phone conversations. Many memories have been made and many have yet to be made.

This feast of the Epiphany — taken from a Greek word meaning “to reveal” or “to manifest” — is best understood, I think, when it is understood as a dialogue or relationship. Clearly, the Feast has the perspective of the Christ Child being revealed to the Magi who had been seeking him. But also, it has the perspective of the Magi “revealing their gifts” to the Christ Child. As Jesus’ life is about seeking what was lost, he would eventually find, as the Magi sought the answer to mystery of astrological anomalies, they would find its reason in a baby. But the more they sought, the more they’d find, and the more Jesus sought, the more he’d find too. This season, I’m grateful that he sought me out and found me — time and time again. —taken from the writings of Brother John-Marmion Villa, which appear on the internet

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

Father John is available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with you. Please call him [440-473-3560] to arrange for this experience. All social distancing will remain in place. Always remember the Lord’s invitation: “I will give them a heart with which to understand that I am the Lord. They shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart”. [Jeremiah 24:7].

