

The Feast of the Epiphany (Jan. 5/6 2019)

The Feast of the Epiphany celebrates the arrival of the “Magi” or wisemen as we have often called them. Epiphany means literally ‘appearance’ or ‘manifestation’ or simply ‘showing.’ It was the ‘showing’ of The New born Christ to the rest of the world. The feast is a really important event in our growth as Christians, or followers of Jesus Christ, because it is an essential portion of our own story.

When I was growing up we celebrated the feast by moving the ‘Wisemen’ with their gifts to the outside of the crib. Before that they had been in the Hallway. Any of you had a tradition like that? We called it ‘Little Christmas’ – January 6th, this also happened to be my father’s birthday so we had to have a great celebration. We had the same dinner as we had for Christmas Day Ham & Turkey and dressing, and all the trimmings, and the family Rosary at the end of the day celebrating the safe arrival of the Magi! We kept the crib up for another week, ready to celebrate the Baptism of Jesus. Wow, as a kid time just seemed to fly, the birth of Jesus, and then His baptism as an adult, and the beginning of His public Ministry. It was all a little snap shot of our faith.

Anyway it was all good! But it was all merely an introductory level of experience in our faith. The natural hope was that the mysteries we were celebrating would become an integral part of our faith as we matured and grew-up! This still remains the big question for each one of us? How have I matured in my faith, from those beautiful simple foundational experiences of my youth? How much time, effort, and energy, have I given to maturing those mysteries of my faith as I am growing up?

How easy it would be for anyone of us to remain at that same basic level of faith development and not grow our faith and relationship with Him as maturing adults. Not growing our faith and relationship with Him intentionally would be something akin, to me trying to get into that wonderful ‘Batman Suit’ I received for Christmas when I was 10 years old. A beautiful suitno doubt, but not a hope that I could fit in it today! No, I need a much bigger ‘Batman Suit’ today! I need a much larger ‘Faith-Suit’ today in order to assist, and lead, and guide me in the journey of my adult life. The suit that worked wonderfully well back then, does not work today. The Faith I had back then Does Not work today.

So, the big question for each one of us is : “What am I doing Consciously, Intentionally, to grow My faith in Jesus Christ, and My Relationship with Him ??????? I invite you to read the bulletin Reflectively, this week and please share your responses with me regarding that information! How am I actively engaging myself in the business of who and what God wants me to be today?

The Feast of the Epiphany, is really a very valuable feast for us to reflect on. For Saint Matthew in his Gospel, the story of the Magi is a sort of fulfillment of the anticipated, or promised, arrival of The Good News of Salvation, a fate that he was seeing in the aftermath of the resurrection! By that, I mean Saint Matthew, who was very well versed in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) was seeing the fulfillment of the promises of those days of old, now coming into full view for all of God’s people.

God had revealed Himself to the Jews through the Scriptures, and to the Gentiles through nature the birth of His Only Son. And so Matthew shows the magi, (who were Gentiles) receiving a revelation through astrology. No need to get bogged down in the star issue, but rather perhaps to ask myself ‘What is my guiding Star to Him’?

The story once again, as is the case throughout the whole of the New Testament, reveals the paradox. The Jews, who have the Scriptures, reject Jesus, while Gentiles come, and with the help of the Scriptures, find and adore Him. This is not a judgement on others, it is simply an invitation to help us to see, and to understand, that the way of God has extraordinary paradoxes that we often fail to understand (The Last shall be First, All of the Laborers in the Vineyard get the same Wage, The Prodigal Son is welcomed home with open arms, and on and on.)

Too often, we just brush by those paradoxes, and glean little or nothing from them. We have got to wrestle with the paradoxes of the Gospel, the Good News. If not, we are going to remain ignorant of the ways of our God. “Ignorance of Scripture is Ignorance of Christ” insists the greatest scholar of them all St. Jerome from the 5th Century. This is why our Liturgy is so full of Scripture We have an Old Testament Reading, A Psalm, A New Testament Reading, and A Gospel Reading We Have a Cycle that covers a 3 year period and our fervent hope is that during that cycle we can try to bring to our people a real sense of the Scriptures, and Knowing Christ Jesus.

It really doesn't appear to be working too well..... Right ?
So what can we do about it ? ????

We have really been working hard on that reality, and have been begging our people to not just read the Scriptures in this assembly, but to really Proclaim the Scriptures, so that you connect with those that are hearing the word proclaimed. That is precisely why we introduced the practice of giving out the "WORKBOOK" at the end of each mass, and praying a Blessing over those who are proclaiming in our Assembly the next weekend. We ask them to please be reflective on the Word they are proclaiming and to spend time on preparing that Word during the course of the week. The workbook provides context for the readings, and helps in the pronunciation of difficult words. It is such a valuable tool !

It is just so easy to recognize in our Assembly when somebody has done that work in preparation ahead of time. In this New Year, I would like to renew our Faithfulness to being Proclaimers of the Word, and not just readers of the Word. We have so much to gain from this. I believe it is part of the leaven that will change our Celebrations ! That is why I have asked the ushers to hold people at the back of church when a Reading is being Proclaimed. It is just not appropriate in our assembly to have somebody walking when we are proclaiming the "Word of The Lord." Likewise, during the Consecration when we are participating in this 'Most Holy Action of our Savior' ! We need to become more attentive to what we are doing, what we are proclaiming, what we are celebrating.

We will spend sometime in this New Year looking at all of the aspects of our celebration of the Eucharist, so that we can bring a renewed energy and life to our celebration ! My prayer is that in this New Year we may again, or for the first time, find a New and Powerful meaning in our Eucharistic Celebrations ! I invite you to join me in that very special venture. I will speak a lot about it as we go along !

Just like the Magi, we will, I promise you, be rewarded for our efforts !

—Fr. Gerry Hurley