



## Sunday Reflection With Fr. Rafal

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ - In his famous story, "*A Christmas Carol*" Charles Dickens describes the danger of false individualism. As you remember, to Ebenezer Scrooge a ghost appears dragging a long heavy chain. The ghost explains that he forged the chain by his own free will - by all the things he clung to. The ghost laments that in his life he kept his head toward the ground, never really seeing people. "Why did I walk through crowds of fellow beings," he says, "with my eyes turned down?" Then he adds that if he had lifted up his head he would have seen not only other people, but a "blessed star" - like the star that led the Wise Men to a "poor abode." Instead of now dragging his possessions as a chain, he could have given them to those in need.

This, my dear St. Joseph Parishioners and Visitors, is our challenge for **Epiphany Sunday** as we begin a New Year 2021: to lift up our eyes to see other people - and the star.

Don't run out of the church. The place to start is here with your own family and your parish family. When you give the sign of peace, see the face of the person (at this moment with a mask on) close to you. Don't worry about greeting everyone in a distance. Look at the other person. Smile. Say: "Peace be with you." Or simply, "Peace." Ask God to help you mean it.

Start with the person next to you, but do not stop there. I remember the great scholar, Cardinal Danielou, talking about riding public transportation. Praying quietly, he said that sometimes he would be overwhelmed by the faces of the people on the bus with him: each one, he thought, God is calling to an eternal relationship.

On this Epiphany Sunday I want to lift my eyes higher still. Like the Wise Men to see the star - the star that guides to a poor abode, to Jesus himself. Meeting Jesus I want to place before him whatever gifts I have.

We sometimes think we do not have gifts fit for Jesus - but that's a lie. That's a lie of the devil who wants to turn our gifts into chains. No, you and I do have gifts as valuable as gold, as sweet as frankincense, as comforting as myrrh.

We can make a new beginning by placing those gifts at Jesus' feet. Start with a smile. It's God's gift. The sour face, it belongs to you. The smile is a gift of God. Ask him, "What do you want me to do? And what is your plan for us at St. Joseph parish?"

We lift up our hearts, we lift our eyes to see the other person - and the star.

Have a Blessed New Year 2021!

*Fr. Rafal Ligenza*

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