

The Epiphany of the Lord
January 13, 2019

Hello parishioners of St. Joseph the Worker. In today's Gospel from Matthew for this year's Epiphany Sunday mass, I believe the message truly focuses in on the journey undertaken by the Magi and the gifts that they presented to Jesus, the new born king.

Matthew describes how the Magi visit Bethlehem from the East and are looking for the King of the Jews. They encounter Herod in Jerusalem where Herod's scribes confirm that a ruler will come from Bethlehem. Yes, there is a sinister plot occurring in the story, but the Magi have a single focus on completing their journey / goal to find the new born king and to honor him and his family with gifts, and they remain focused on this holy, spiritual goal. I believe that the Magi's journey is like our individual daily journeys. As each one of us travels through our day we are on a journey to work, school, the gym, the store, etc. We must decide what to do, what to wear, and who to listen to, what shows to watch, what to buy and make a variety of choices. Like the Magi, we need to stay focused on our daily spiritual journey and "do" the activities that bring us closer to finishing our goal and finding Jesus. It's hard and the Lord knows it. That's why we have been given our loved ones to help us along our journey just like the Magi had each other to safely travel those desert roads to get to see baby Jesus.

Once reaching the new born baby, the Magi present the Holy Family with their three gifts; gold, frankincense and myrrh. We believe through our Catholic teachings that the gold represents Jesus' kingship. The frankincense is a symbol of his divinity. The myrrh (which was used to prepare the dead for burial) represents the anticipation of Jesus dying for us. Over the centuries we have been taught that the gifts foreshadow Jesus' role in the salvation that he provides the world. The word Epiphany means "manifestation" or "showing forth." Historically, several moments in Christ's early life and ministry have been celebrated as "epiphanies," including his birth in Bethlehem, the visit of the Magi, his baptism by John, and his first miracle at Cana. We don't necessarily have gifts like these to honor Jesus on a daily basis, but we do have gifts that we can provide. I believe that Matthew is trying to tell us in this Gospel that we need to actively distribute our gifts to the world in honor of our faith, whether it's a monetary donation to the church, time spent coaching and teaching children, doing the readings at Mass, helping a colleague at work, slowing down to help someone merge onto the interstate or even exercising your ability to give the gift of a smile to a stranger. These are the types of gifts that we can and should work to give every day to those around us and our community.

Like the Magi, by actively understanding what gifts we possess and by providing and exercising these gifts daily, each one of us will honor the sacrifice Jesus and the Holy Family provided for us and allow us to meet our daily goals of stepping closer and closer to achieving our journeys' goal of being with the Lord.

Carl Try