

Epiphany - 2019

Intro: My wife has a Christmas decoration that read: If the three Wisemen had been three Wisewomen – They would have asked for directions sooner and got there in time for the delivery, helped around the house and brought practical gifts.

In many ways, we are all like the three wise men: We are all outsiders (in one way or another), we seek Jesus and we are gift givers.

I. We are outsiders: Like the wise men who came from another country, they were culturally and religiously different from the Israelites, who at the time felt they were THE only chosen people. They looked down on all other non-Jews and called them Gentiles (the Unclean).

In many ways each of us are outsiders from each other, whether culturally, politically, morally. We are challenged by people who act different, talk different, look different and often we are arrogant and unforgiving of those with Aids or addictions, or un-churched or uneducated or don't live up to our standards.

But Jesus says: "All are welcome here". No one is excluded from the love of God. He praises the Good Samaritan who cares for the injured man by the road. He speaks with the Woman at the well, he let's the children come to him and he touches lepers and eats with sinners. Eats with sinners and is Himself the food here at the Eucharist. All are welcome each of us foreigners in many ways from each other. Saints and sinners, insiders and outsiders.

That is what St. Paul is telling the Ephesians in our second reading today," that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise of Christ" That's the message of Epiphany. All are welcome. Jesus makes out the invite list - not us. Look out! Here comes Everybody!!

II. Secondly, Like the Wisemen, We are seekers: We travel together, often in a caravan we call family with companions and friends, sharing adventures and stories as we follow the light. Yet each of us living out our own personal faith journey along the way. Often the journey is not easy or simple, there are dangers along the way and sometimes we stumble and fall and help each other back up and continue towards the light.

The Wisemen probably travelled hundreds of miles in their search for the King of the Jews. The Jews wandered 40 years in the desert to travel 40 miles to the promise land. The Shepherds, upon hearing the good news from the Angels, left their flocks (acted upon the news) and traveled just a few miles to find the newborn Jesus. They did not have to seek very long or far to find Jesus. Most of us only have to travel 16 inches to encounter Jesus. The distance from an adults' ear to his heart. Upon hearing the good news it must travel to the part of our bodies where generosity and gratitude emerge – which leads us to the third way in which we are like the 3 Wisemen.

III. Once we find Jesus, we are gift givers:

STORY:

A young woman went to teach for a couple of years in Fiji. When the time came for her to return to the United States, her students gave her gifts. One little boy brought her a spectacular cowrie shell. She knew that those types of shells were not found nearby and asked him how he got it. He told her that he

had walked four miles to the beach where these shells were known to be found and then walked the four miles back after finding the shell. He then, touched the teacher's heart saying: "Long walk part of gift".

The Feast of the Epiphany is really each of our stories. We are outsiders, seeking Jesus, and taking lots of long walks to share our gift with the greatest teacher of all.