

St Pius & St Anthony Homily Epiphany Year B

When I was a kid in school, maybe when we students would be ‘maxxing’ out on our at desk assignments, we might try to divert ourselves, (likely the bathroom excuse was out of the question, and sharpening pencil was not possible –we weren’t in math, and didn’t have any paper to wad up and have to go throw away, so the last shot at doing something that would not obviously get you a dictionary column or have to stand on wall at recess, would be to sit and stare up at the ceiling, as if there was smoke coming from the lights or something, and then watch how many other students you could get to look up too! Until the teacher noticed and gave the command ‘heads down and work’. I know we might go through that in here when after being spooked back in the November accident, as we look over at the parking lot windows-‘is that a car’? But the wise men (and the shepherds had that too, as they saw a sight in the sky- brilliant angels singing and proclaiming), they all looked up. We all know how such looking up or focusing can be contagious. And for we people of faith, it should be. Colossians 3:1 calls us to **‘seek what is above’**. We should be looking for signs of God’s hand at work in the world around us or above us. Certainly, the signs of God’s presence are all around us (Luke 17:20, 10:9, 11; 11:20 all say the kingdom of God is in your midst, is among you, is at hand, is near.....)

So, the feast of epiphany for me is a call to ‘search & seek for the Lord’ - to discern the work of God in the world. I love about the wise men that they were just going about their normal routines studying, discussing among themselves normal challenges and problems, maybe elegant math equations or whether there is a grand unifying force or theory to the universe, and suddenly they observe something new in the sky and commit themselves to exploring it. They seek out its meaning. Observant, they notice, that is new, so they pursue, what is going on? That is a call for all of us. What will we pursue in the coming year? I know a lot of people make resolutions at this time of year, (many don’t and okay) I remind myself, that to say “I resolve not to do such” is also a resolution! But a frequent one is to say that every day in the coming year, I am going to learn one new thing or one new word. If I could suggest, I ‘d say that can be our gift to God, (like the wise men presenting their tribute) we can present to god every day the gift of checking in with Him. At least read one new verse of scripture or one line from catechism-or one new saint’s name every day! Why? Because such seeking gets us up and going each day-seeking God’s way. It keeps us thriving instead of

just surviving, and helps us grow into our next stage. I think of it like some fish, (afraid, it is sharks) who cannot breathe if they are not moving through the water taking in a fresh source, so also our faith, if not fed or exercised, it will wane or wither. And we do want faith to grow... So we pray and we read, and we seek or study like the wise men. And we will find (Jesus says as much-see, you find, knock, it opens Matt 7:7) Faith strengthens and advances through its use and application. I like what they say about scientists in a laboratory, that the most exciting time to be around is right after someone says, "I didn't expect that". Because don't you know that they will be repeating experiments and checking observations to find out what is new-if it is truly a discovery or not; like a Nobel Prize or something. That is what the wise men do today by embarking on a world tour to get to the bottom of this new star's appearance, and they are going to discover a find of a lifetime- or an eternal lifetime because by their searching they will find not only a new light's purpose but the creator behind that star!

And what about those gifts: Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh. We've all heard the jokes; the gifts are not practical, or are they? They really show that the wise men knew who they were coming to: the gifts symbolize and mark the mission of Jesus. (John Baptist will also announce Jesus' coming) But these three gifts were statements predicting the Savior's role of Jesus as Priest, Prophet and King. The gold as a gift fitting a king (because what else do you get a king who has everything-gold just put it in his treasury for good works), so gold represents his kingly leadership, the incense represents Jesus' priestly role, his mission to sanctify -make holy, raise up his people -teach them to pray-adore & worship, and the myrrh is a fragrant oil for anointing one who suffers and ultimately anoint the body following death, which signifies that Jesus came to suffer and die for his people. & He does. So the wise men's gifts are practical in as much as they reveal early on what Jesus this newborn king is going to accomplish! He is our priest prophet and king. But what does this Epiphany feast mean to us? How will we seek the Lord in the coming year? What gift will we offer Christ each day?

I can think of three things inspired from our readings today:

- 1) Dedicate a little more time to pray each day, on your own or with others. Give God a little time each day as quiet time, down time, or as recharging.
- 2) Read a word, or verse or chapter of scripture each day. Start with gospel!
- 3) Look up! The wise men were overjoyed by the Star-Light of Christ. We too can be more hopeful, positive and joyful by looking up, seeking what's above. God's grace is spread out all around us, if we have the eyes to see!