

Epiphany
St. Matthew 2:1-12
January 3, 2016
St. George's Bolton
Fr. Chris

Star Light

"They set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

Following a star, a natural sign. We sometimes gaze up at the night sky on a clear night, and can see the wonder of the vast universe shining back down upon us. And there are some stars that are especially bright, that we take note of.

Some folks make note of Astrology, believing that the position of the stars in the night sky somehow has an effect on their lives. I have often perused that column in the daily paper, to see what my fortune portends. Occasionally, it is quite prescient. Most days, the commentary or prediction is so generic, it could fit almost any situation, or in hindsight, you might try to fit your experienced situations into the earlier astrological projection. In short, I suspect that the so-called "science" of astrology has little to do with what happens in my life, but you never know.

Mankind has always looked to the stars to try and read them and what they might teach us. What I think they teach me is that I am but a tiny spec in the whole cosmic scheme of things, and that their beauty and magnitude ought to produce a feeling of deep humility in me. We now know that reaching even the closest star

would be a project that is light years off in our future, that even getting to Mars, our closest planetary neighbor, may be beyond our ability, though not our imagination. At least it is for the present. So for now, this earthly home is it. And the stars suggest just how much more is out there. The stars are our source of light in the darkness of the night. They are the means which sailors use to chart their course across the deep dark waters of the oceans. Wise travelers know you can always use the stars to guide you and help you find your way.

Many days, sometimes months go by for me (*and perhaps you also*) without glancing up at the stars in the sky. It is no wonder, as our lives are so full, and the light from our urban centers is so bright, that it would be hard to notice much of what is going on in the sky above you, unless you make a real effort to do so. The only stars you will likely see on a regular basis will be on the small screen.

Not so for the three wise individuals who observed this very unique astronomical (*note I did not say astrological*) event. They noted the rising of the star and understood to some extent what it meant, that a new special person was arriving on this earth. Exactly where, they did not know, but it was somewhere in the east. They saddled up and went searching.

Astrophysicists they were not, yet their wisdom told them something special was happening, and they wanted to see for themselves. More than that, they wanted to greet the new king.

What stars are there in your life? What would draw you out of your home to go exploring?

I was out driving last evening and a great distance, I noticed a large five-pointed star pretty high up in the air, on top of an

electrical transmission tower, a little over a mile in the distance. It was obviously a part of a Christmas decoration, with what appeared to be rays of light leading to the ground. As I drove closer and closer, the image became clearer, until I reached the place where the star was. I pulled over, and now I could no longer see the star way up on top of the tower, but instead was amazed by the long string of lights that created the effect of rays of light stretching to the ground. And then I thought of that night long ago when travelers from afar reached their destination: the place where the infant Jesus lay asleep in the hay. There was no Holy Family gathered below the electrical tower, just a great big field on a farm. However, I found great pleasure and joy in the artful way someone had decided to make a point and celebrate the holiday. It was a glimpse for me of the joy and wonder which those travelers must have felt long ago on that dark night!

Lights guide us in the night when we are driving, especially when you are out in the countryside. Light leads the way in the deep darkness of night to our destinations. Light also guides us in our spiritual life, pointing us to the truth about ourselves and the truth about why we are here on this earth, and how to use our time. This Jesus is like a 1,000,000 lumen lantern in your life to guide you to see your path through it. An extremely bright flashlight would be about 1,000 lumens, or the new spotlight shining on the cross on the front of our church at night is about 1500 lumens lighting up the night sky in place of what was once deep darkness, while we were hiding our light under a bushel. Now one small spotlight leads the way...

Spiritually, this season, this time of the year is all about light. There is nothing more frightening than when you thought you knew where you were supposed to be heading, and you find yourself groping about blindly in the darkness. It is like one of

those anxiety dreams, where you keep trying, but the harder you try you keep blindly bumping into a wall. You need to get some light!

The spiritual heart and truth which this season communicates to us, which the Star guiding the *wise travelers* portends, is summed up in these words which should sound familiar from last week when we read them from the opening of the Gospel of John:

"What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world." This is the light the wise travelers witnessed. And this is the light which is always available to guide your life. And this is the light we are called at St. George's to magnify as a beacon in the darkness for others to find their God. There can never be too much light.

This Epiphany consider this response to the light which shines in your life and in your heart: *Let your light so shine in the world that others may see the good it has done in your life and witness how this light has been shed by you in good works upon others, that they may see that light and give glory to your God in heaven.*
AMEN