

# Church of the Good Shepherd and St. John the Evangelist

Feast of the Epiphany  
January 6, 2008  
Fr Bill McGinty

## **“Be a Star! Be an Epiphany!”**

Today’s great feast of the Epiphany is a celebration that God’s revelation has been made manifest to the world. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has come into the world and he has been made known.

Paul, writing to the Christians in Ephesus, tells them that what was a ‘mystery’ in the Old Testament has been made known. God has come among his people. He speaks of the Promise of Christ, the promise of transformation to a new life, liberated from slavery to sin. It is a life where each of us becomes children of God and heirs of his Kingdom.

There is a sense today, that the image of the three Wise men following the star truly represents the whole of the chosen people and the prophets seeking after God’s promise of old, that he would send them a Messiah, a Savior, who would free them from the weight of sin and bring them to a new enlightenment.

The story of the Magi is a beautiful story that captures the struggle between good and evil. Herod represents the dark side of monarchy, greed, evil and power. The child born in Bethlehem ushers in a new kind of Kingship. It is a Kingship that unites with the sacred, with Priesthood, to inaugurate a Kingdom of all believers. The gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh spell out this struggle. We are a people of God’s Kingdom, called to worship and consecrated to be a holy people in his service.

Reflecting back on the Magi story most of us can identify with it as our story also.

Did we not spend most of our childhood in a state of unknowing? Were we not continually asking questions of parents, teachers and professors? What is it all about? What is life about? What does it all mean?

We spend most of our young lives seeking for answers and spending years learning stuff that we never use again. It is youth, says the Book of Micah, who dream dreams and see visions. Just like the Wise men, we all want to follow some star or other. Most of us set out on some journey or other unsure where it will lead or what its outcome will be. We often have some vague notions of happiness, achievement, career, success or even fame.

Yet, despite school, college, career guidance and all, we can still end up disorientated and at a quandary as to the real direction and purpose of our lives. (I use the word disorientated for two reasons. One because the Magi were from the Orient and had no clue

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where they were going, and two because it makes my wife squirm, because she says the word doesn't exist. (Disorientate: confuse as to his or her whereabouts or bearings. Confuse a person as in disorientated by his unexpected behavior) the *Oxford English Dictionary of the English Language*. Published 1991 Oxford Unvi Press, New York.

Like the Magi so many of us need a star to guide us in our life. Today's Gospel poses that question to a world that is lost and seeking direction. Where is your star? Where is your guiding light? Each and every day men and women around the world will read their horoscope in the newspaper or Internet hoping that it will give them some clue as to the direction their life is going.

St. Paul tells the Ephesians: "I too was once like you. Once I was lost, having great knowledge, but knowing nothing. I once had position and power, influence and esteem. I charged around the country, but to what end? It took an Epiphany, one solitary, blinding moment when all was revealed to me, before I changed and changed forever. You who once knew me, no longer know me. You, who once esteemed me, no longer esteem me. And you who once feared me, no longer fear me."

"Because today I know who I am. I am Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to proclaim his Holy Gospel to the Gentile and to the world. Are you a Christian? So am I. Are you an Apostle? So am I. Are you a prisoner of sin lost in a pit of despair? Not I, I am a prisoner of Jesus Christ and happy to be so because he is my guiding light, he is my star, he is my beginning and end. He has given direction to my life."

The story of the Magi asks us as individuals: "Where is your Epiphany? Speak of the Revelation you have received. Where does Jesus Christ fit into your life? Have you run away with the gold or do you linger to worship with the incense? Have you decided to become a servant of Christ too, hands and face consecrating yourself to his mission and work?"

Paul's life changed on that fateful day on the road to Damascus. One vision of Jesus set him on a new path. All of us, who have been exposed to the Gospels and the message of Jesus for so long have had many Epiphanies and many visions of Jesus.

We have seen him in the words of that favorite teacher in 1967 who said: "Fall in love with the Gospel of John." We have seen it in Brother Roger of Taize introducing Jesus to the youth of the world. We have seen it in the Mother Teresa's reaching out to the poorest of the poor and Doctor Billy Graham putting people in touch with the Jesus of the Bible. The story of the Magi today is not preaching to the choir. It is not calling us to Epiphany. It is calling us to be a star.

"We have observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage."

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The story of the Magi calls us to proclaim to others, what we know already, that God's son has come into the world and that his message, his teaching, his way, is the transforming Epiphany that can give direction to lives.

"Be a star" the Gospel invites, "Be a beacon of light for others who come into your sphere of influence. Let others know by knowing who you are, that Jesus Christ is the guiding light of your life.

Say to yourself, you like me. You want to be my friend? I am your favorite teacher, then you have to know what makes me tick. What makes me tick, what makes my world go around, is Jesus Christ. Say: "Ask me what I think of war? I hate it. It is the direct opposite of the Gospel. Ask me who I vote for? I vote for the person with Gospel values. Ask me what I hope for? I hope for a world of peace where the dignity of every human being is loved and respected. Ask me what I work for? I work for a Kingdom of love, justice, equality and forgiveness. Ask me who I work for? I work for Christ Jesus and I am proud to have the job.

Let us ask ourselves today, who we are a star to. I hope we are a star to our children first. I hope they remember and see in us an Epiphany that speaks to them of Jesus. Would we not all settle for that? That we gave direction to our children's lives? That they chose to follow Jesus and love as he loved, forgive as he forgave and strive for peace amid a world of greed and conflict.

Being a star is not easy. You have to shine out on bad days as well as good; when your hair is a mess, your hip is playing up and the school tax just went up. The newspaper got wet and the dog chewed your slippers.

Paul knew this more than once. He constantly tells his converts, how imperfect he is as a man and a person. He cannot explain why God chose him with all his faults and many failings. He only knows that wretched as he is, he is Christ wretch, Christ's clown, and he will proclaim him all his days.

Sometime in the future, I hope in the long time away future, we will wheel you in through the main doors of the church. The Altar Guild will place a white Pall with a great golden cross upon your casket and we will wheel you before the Altar of your God. Then we'll sing your praises and mark you with oil and incense and claim you as belonging to Christ. We will stand and say you were an Epiphany; you were a star and send you home by a different road to rest in the Kingdom Christ your Lord prepared for you. Till that day, in the words of today's Gospel: "Be that Epiphany. Be that star. Shine for all to see that Jesus Christ is Lord, now and forever."

Amen+

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