

## Epiphany, January 5 2020

There is a very important question in today's Gospel. This question is so important that it contains the very first words spoken in the Gospel of Matthew. The question is "Where is the newborn king of the Jews?" We could study the whole gospel of Matthew through the lens of that question alone. A question that we could take to our daily prayer and reflection is, "Where is Jesus the newborn King?" in whatever situation or circumstance that we might be facing.

Our parish mission statement, *Ignite Faith and Witness God's Love* speaks to the question, "where is Jesus" and the search of the Magi for Jesus. The Magi teach us how to search Jesus in our time. They teach us to keep at it, not give up. They teach us that the search will transform us, that we will become someone altogether new. The search for Jesus transformed the Magi. Their faithful search for Jesus is in stark contrast to King Herod's desire. They search for faith from above, Herod searches to keep control here below. They search for what is eternal; Herod tries to hold on to what is passing. The light of the star guides the Magi, while Herod is guided by the darkness of hatred and fear. He even was willing to put three of his sons to death. The Magi search of the King of Universe, and Herod searches to remain the King of Israel. In their search, for something far beyond themselves, the Magi are willing to listen to messages from God in dreams; they avoid the trap that Herod has laid. When they find the child who is to be King, they are able to share in his kingship, they become more than magi, more than astrologers, they become kings.

The Magi who become kings are a symbol of our faith journey. We search for the presence of Christ in our daily lives, in the struggle of family life, the daily grind of going to work or going to school, in trying to get done everything we need to do and still have some kind of prayer life. When we keep looking up, even when the sky is dark, we search for the light of the star, the light that will guide and that light is Jesus. When we are faithful in that search and do not grow discouraged we have the promise that at some time, in God's time, not our time, we will find Jesus. The Father will show us how Jesus is Lord and King of all things, he will lead us to understand how we share in his Kingship, what it means that we were anointed at our baptism as Jesus was anointed by God as priest, prophet and king. This leads us back to our mission statement, *Ignite Faith and Witness God's Love*.

The word “ignite” suggests light and fire. The star is a light, a gigantic ball of fire that is above us and beyond us, yet its light does reach us. The light and fire of God’s love is a light that pierces the darkness with the birth of Christ, the Word made flesh, the invisible made visible, and God who became human so that we could become divine. Through our baptism, the light that was once far beyond us now lives in our hearts. We “ignite faith” as we remain committed to the journey of searching for the newborn king in our own time. The search is life-long. We can never say on this side of heaven that the search is done. The Magi remind us of this because there are strong indications in the Gospel of Matthew that their search was not just days or weeks, not even months. It was most likely years of searching. They search for the newborn king and the Greek word in the text for the child that they find would not mean a baby. It would mean a young child, three to seven years old. What are we willing to do to ignite your faith for the long haul, to look for Jesus in every stage and situation in our life? Are we willing to stay with the journey, even when it is tiring or discouraging? The Magi give us the encouragement to keep at it and not give up. We make a big mistake when we think that confirmation is like graduation, the end of process. Confirmation is only the beginning of what it means to live by the light of the Holy Spirit.

*Witness God’s Love.* The message of the Magi is that God’s love is big! God’s Kingdom is beyond our imaging. Herod did not have much imagination. He went into a tailspin of fear because he thought that his power over the tiny nation of Israel was threatened. Jesus, the King of the Universe did not come to topple the power of Herod. He came give him and us unimaginable power that comes from the Kingdom of God. One of the dangers of our time is that too many people think like Herod with too little imagination, what is often called a tribal mentality. Any one of us can succumb to the fear of entering into dialogue with those who might think differently than us. The East against the West, conservatives or liberals whether in politics or the Church, those who want to promote a strong global economy against those who want to protect the earth, both predicting dire consequences if their world view is not promoted. Social media creates a culture where people create chatrooms where people only affirm their own worldview rather than to encourage true dialogue. The Magi’s search was true because they were on an honest search to find the light of faith. They found the truth because they looked beyond themselves and kept their eyes focused on God and they found that the truth was not an idea, but a person Jesus Christ the Lord.