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Epiphany Sunday Year A  
Monsignor Harry Posner  
Christ the Good Shepherd, OCC  
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As we celebrate the feast of Epiphany, we experience a subtle change in the theme of our liturgy. From the first Sunday of Advent, through the Sunday following Christmas, our focus was on God coming to us, seeking us out. Today, with the feast of Epiphany, the focus now shifts to our quest for God's presence in our lives. Now it's our turn to respond to God's invitation, to God's decision to dwell among us. As St. Augustine said: "Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee."

The word "epiphany" comes from a Greek word meaning manifestation. It reminds us that the birth of Christ is not just a one time historical event that occurred in the city of Bethlehem. When we seek God, God is manifested to us in unexpected ways each and every day. When we open our eyes, when we willingly journey, God is manifested in new and exciting ways, often in the simple and mundane events of daily life.

The Magi, in today's gospel, saw a star rising in the sky and somehow knew it would lead them to a place to which they were called. They believed that at the end of their journey, they would find a little child that was destined to change the world. They journeyed in faith believing that they would meet the newborn King who was destined for all people, who would prepare a place for everyone at the table, not for just the people of Israel. Someone or something encouraged the Magi to follow this star; maybe it was an angel, or perhaps it was a just a deep yearning in their hearts. "Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee."

What a shock it must have been for the Magi when they were led to a stable rather than a palace. After all, they were seeking a newborn king, but found a homeless refuge child living amongst animals. But with trust in their hearts, the Magi fell to the ground knowing they had found the child whom they sought. They presented their symbolic gifts of gold, which represented royalty, frankincense, which was used for honor and worship, and myrrh, which was used for anointing of the dead; foretelling the passion and death of Jesus. The Magi's complete

trust should be an inspiration for us to also place our unquestioning trust in Jesus.

It is not only in the joys and pleasures of life where we find God. More often, it is in the challenges when we most feel God's presence. Life's journey can be a challenge, there are detours and roadblocks, celebrations and moments of great joy, there are hills and valleys, there are dangers and there are dark days and nights. We often struggle to do the right thing. Sometimes we fail; sometimes we succeed. But it is in the trying that God takes delight. Saint Teresa of Avila, said that we are never closer to God than when we're immersed in the ordinary things of daily life. Rather than at the feast, St. Teresa said "God is in the pots and the pans. It is in the work of service.

The Magi brought extravagant gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to Bethlehem. What gifts can we offer? Ourselves! We are far more precious than gold. The gold we offer is our hands, our hearts, our love, and our treasures and talents when we raise up the lowly, comfort the sick, and spread the love of God to those in need. The frankincense we offer is our prayer and worship of our great God of love. When we recognize and honor the presence of God in our neighbors, especially those whom we dislike or who have wronged us, we offer praise to God. Our gift of myrrh is our heartaches and sufferings given as gratitude for the suffering and death Jesus endured for us. Patient endurance.

As we gather as a community of believers, let us examine our hearts and minds and ask God to continue to walk with us as we journey toward our eternal home. Like the Magi, let faith guide our hearts to the truth that brings us peace. Let our hands and hearts be the gifts we offer to our loving savior. May our prayer lead us to this table where we encounter Jesus in the Eucharist. Let us pray that God will help us replace our pettiness and sinfulness with hearts and hands motivated by love and compassion.

Can I hear an Amen?