

There are times when gentle conversation becomes prayer

Year B – 2021 The Epiphany of the Lord

Is 60:1-6, Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6, Mt 2:1-12



Photo Jamin Bradley

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Central to today's Gospel is the appearance of a star that led the Magi to the infant Jesus. This year, brought us the possibility of seeing the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. Overcast skies limited our observation here in Kalamazoo.

Some have suggested this holiday season that these two planets might be a replica of the legendary Star of Bethlehem. Actually, one of the more popular theories for the "Christmas Star" was a series of conjunctions between Jupiter and Saturn in 7 BC. For in that year Jupiter and Saturn met not once but three times that year (in May, September and December).

The first conjunction (on May 29 — visible "in the east" before sunrise) presumably started the Magi on their way to Bethlehem from the Far East. The middle conjunction (September 30) may have strengthened their resolve in the purpose of their journey, while the third and final conjunction (Dec. 5) occurred just as they arrived in Judea to meet with King Herod, who sent them on to Bethlehem to "go and search diligently for the young child." (Nwes/Skywatching, 2020)

Our Gospel, in a broad brush, is about finding the Divine, finding Jesus. How do we do that in our lifetime? The Magi followed a star. Sometimes, because of the events in our lives, the skies are overcast and we cannot see with any direction. If we read and linger with the Gospel, it suggests that the physical universe cooperated to bring the Magi to the one they were seeking. Think about that. The universe was created, in Christ, with Christ, and through Christ who is the Alpha and Omega. The synchronicity of the created universe seeks to reveal the person of Jesus. That is the Epiphany of our journey. Knowing that God seeks our relationship, we open ourselves to hear the divine whisper, an invitation to draw closer.

We often speak of spreading the Gospel, being the hands and heart of the Lord... and this is right and good. We must not forget, however, most importantly, that God has not only been there before us, but remains in each of us. God does the *heavy lifting* to reveal the Sacred Image that he shares with each of us. Like the Christmas Star, God will use the physical universe, the whole of creation to make us aware of the Divine Presence. When I think over my life and moments of sacred awareness they were set in nature, a sunrise, a sunset, a walk on the lakeshore listening to waves, a grandson's laughter. There are times when gentle conversation becomes prayer. The prayer is not preformed or rote but flows from a respect and dignity for the other. "Where two or more are gathered..." Ah, that is the Good Stuff! That is what I think we all miss most in this pandemic.

Lonely hearts cry out without warning. All of creation calls out to us that there is something more. The Native Americans understood the sacredness of Mother Earth. Our Epiphany is the discovery of finding ourselves within God's creation and love. I want to close with a reflection from Fr. Henri Nouwen.

Strong emotions, self-rejection, and even self-hatred justifiably toss you about, but you are free to respond as you will. You are not what others, or even you, think about yourself. You are not what you do. You are not what you have. You are a full member of the human family, having been known before you were conceived and molded in your mother's womb. In times when you feel bad about yourself, try to choose to remain true to the truth of who you really are. Look in the mirror each day and claim your true identity. Act ahead of your feelings and trust that one day your feelings will match your convictions. Choose now and continue to choose this incredible truth. As a spiritual practice claim and reclaim your primal identity as beloved daughter or son of a personal Creator.

Bibliography

All scripture quotations are taken from. (1987). *The New American Bible, Revised edition*. USCCB.

Nwes/Skywatching. (2020, 12 24). Retrieved from Space.com: <https://www.space.com/great-conjunction-jupiter-saturn-2020-fun-facts>

Nouwen, H. (2017). *You are the beloved*. New York, New York, USA: Convergent Books.

I welcome your questions and comments. My email is fsila@sttomskazoo.org. (n.d.).

Note: Due to Covid-19 this homily was not delivered in person but posted on the St. Thomas More Catholic Student Parish website. (n.d.).