

HOMILY – THE EPIPHANY 2021

Each year, the Church celebrates the liturgical feast of the Epiphany. It is often called the day of the three kings or the Magi. Everything we know about the Magi is contained in the few verses that we have just heard proclaimed in the Gospel of Matthew.

We are given very little information about them. They come from the East, but we are not told what country they came from. We are told they were looking for the newborn king of the Jews but we are not told exactly why. Even though we have always assumed there were three of them, we are actually not told the number by Matthew. We know from the account that they had three gifts; gold, frankincense and myrrh.

There is even one theory that suggests that the Magi could have been women. But that is very doubtful because if they had been women, they would have asked for directions and arrived on time, helped deliver the baby, cleaned the stable, made a casserole, and brought useful gifts like diapers, instead of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

There is a Persian legend that the Magi are different ages. Balthazar is a teenager, Caspar is in his forties, and Melchior is an old man. As the three men follow the star and arrive at the place where Jesus is (which the legend says is a cave), they decide to enter individually. Balthazar goes in first. He finds the cave empty, except for a young boy the same age as he is. As he exits, Caspar goes in. There is nothing in the cave except for a man in his forties like him. Finally Melchior enters. All that is there is an old man.

The three men are discouraged. They begin to wonder if their long journey was in vain. They discuss returning to their own country. Then Melchior says, "Let's try this one more time. This time let's go in together." So the three Magi walk into the cave together and find the child Jesus with his mother. They prostrate themselves and offer their gifts.

This Persian legend helps us focus on a Biblical message rather well. The message of Epiphany – the message of the Magi – is that God's salvation is available to all people. The love of God spans all the differences that are present in humanity.

God's love bridges all of our divisions of nationality, race, politics, and economic background. We are all one, united in the love of God that comes to us in Christ.

God's love and his mission are not limited to any one generation. God's glory and God's goodness can be seen in the experiences of every age group. God invites the energy of the young, the responsibility of the middle-age, and the wisdom of the elderly. We should be open to see and hear God speak to us in our grandchildren, in our parents, in our sons and daughters, in friendships and relationships that we establish with people in generations other than our own. It is only together that the fullness of God's glory can be seen.

On this feast of the Epiphany, the Magi give us an example of trust. We must trust, in our journey to follow Christ, that God will lead us and trust even when it seems God is not leading us. Even when the trail runs cold, we believe and trust that God will not let us get lost. The Magi would never have reached their destination had they not continued to trust. They saw the star as a sign, a sign that led them to the long awaited Savior. God who sent the star is capable of continuing to lead us even without a star.