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Happy New Year's everybody!

And happy new decade...welcome to the 2020's!

For the past week, prophets, pundits, and experts have been giving their predictions for the future.

Some say that brighter days are ahead, others are less rosy.

Some warn that storm clouds are gathering, others see the light at the end of a tunnel.

What do you think this new beginning will bring *for you*?

Are you optimistic or pessimistic?

Are you ready for a change?

SCREEN: 20/20 Vision main screen

To help you figure all this out, we are beginning a bold message series titled, appropriately, 20/20 Vision.

Here's a description of what this series is about:

When a new year begins we look at the things about ourselves we don't like and resolve to change -

to get in shape, reconnect with loved ones, get involved in church.

To be spiritually healthy, you need to see yourself as God sees you.

And God has 20/20 vision.

When God looks at you he sees his child, filled with the Holy Spirit; a disciple of his Son called to share the Good News.

In this series, discover how to live every day of this new year seeing yourself as God does.

Resolve to have 20/20 vision.

See yourself as God does....resolve to have 20/20 vision.

The readings for Epiphany gave us a perfect road map for getting there.

Let's take a look at today's Scriptures.

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GOD: All through Advent we heard from the Prophet Isaiah,

and guess what....*he's back!*

We heard from Isaiah today and we will hear from him again over the next three weekends.

In Advent we heard how Isaiah told the king and the people of Judah to listen to God and follow his teachings.

Isaiah saw storm clouds gathering.

He warned them that unless they turned back to God, disaster would strike.

Sadly, they didn't listen and Isaiah's prophecy came true.

The nation was overrun and the people taken into captivity.

But their exile came to an end, they returned to the Promised Land to clean up the ruin and rebuild.

So Isaiah's message today was hopeful; he literally saw the light at the end of the tunnel - a new beginning for God's Chosen People.

Here is what he wrote to them:

**SCREEN: Your light has come,
the glory of the Lord shines upon you....
Nations shall walk by your light,
and kings by your shining radiance.
Raise your eyes and look about;
they all gather and come to you....
Then you shall be radiant at what you see,
your heart shall throb and overflow -*Isaiah 60***

He challenged them to see things in a new way, to have a new vision; to see themselves as God sees them.

When God looked at the people of Judah, he didn't see their mistakes or sins or imperfections; no he saw his children, his beloved.

And God also saw their amazing potential to be his messengers - instruments of his love and grace for the whole world.

He wanted them to be shining examples of faith that would draw others to the Kingdom of God.

That's what Isaiah meant when he wrote that other nations would walk by their light;

said they would gather and come to you.

But for this to happen, they would need a new outlook,
a new way of seeing themselves.

They'd need new glasses so to speak,
one's that would provide 20/20 vision.

SCREEN: The three magi picture

We believe that Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus Christ
and in the journey of the magi we celebrate at Epiphany.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Who were these travelers?

Our beautiful manger scene depicts them as kings...three kings.

The gospel you heard said they were magi, which means they were astrologers.

They studied the movement of the stars in the heavens
and tried to predict what was going to happen on earth.

So they were not Jewish, and did not live in Israel.

Their lives changed dramatically one night when they
looked up and saw a new star in the heavens.

This could only mean one thing: a king had been born.

They decided to follow the star so they set out on a long journey.

I don't want this fact to be lost on you.

Astrologers were not explorers.

Their work would have been a stationary one;
looking up and interpreting what they saw.

But what they saw that night was so dramatic they knew they had to move,
had to explore and seek out even though they had absolutely no idea where
it would take them.

And what a journey it was.

In leaving behind all that was comfortable and known; in being willing
to go in an entirely new direction, they were among the very first to

behold the savior of the world.

The Gospel told us this:

SCREEN: They prostrated themselves and did him homage.

Then they opened their treasures

and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The magi saw what so many others missed.

All the religious leaders missed it.

The authorities were blind and clueless.

But the magi were open to the nudging God was giving them.

With the appearance of the star, God was saying to them,

“Hey, look at this! This is important. Don’t miss it.”

And they didn’t.

They set out, left their past behind, and were even willing to change course on their journey.

I’d described that as having 20/20 vision.

And because they had it, they experienced an epiphany

- the glory of God was revealed to them in a new and unexpected way.

Today’s Gospel ended by telling us that

the magi returned to their country by another way.

Another way.

God was continually leading them someplace new.

And that’s the message God is sending you.

YOU: If you’re looking at your life and know that something needs to change, be open to God’s call.

If life’s challenges or setbacks have you feeling down or doubting, be open to a new direction.

If you just feel bored, stuck in a rut, or tired of the same old routine, be open to God’s nudging this new year.

And if you do want something different for your life,

like the magi, know that it will require 20/20 spiritual vision -

like them, you'll need to be open to God leading you someplace new.

How can you find what they found?

First, begin by admitting, that on your own it is so easy to get lost in life;
to get distracted or sidetracked.

It can happen when people make life all about their job, their possessions, or
a certain relationship.

Not bad things...good things.

It can happen so easily; maybe it's happened to you.

And when it happens, know that God looks at you with love.

He doesn't dwell on your past, or your sins, or your mistakes;
instead God sees your future and your potential for greatness.

God's goal is to give you a course correction;

wants to renew your faith and lead you someplace new so that
you can be a joyful, peaceful, faith-filled disciple.

Like the people Isaiah preached to,

God needs your light to shine so you can lead others to him.

SCREEN: 20/20 Vision main screen

As a new year begins, as you contemplate the journey God is asking you to make,
it's helpful to know your starting point.

To help you figure that out, we created a takeaway for this series....here it is. (hold up)

You can grab one of these at the exits or download it from our website.

A great Catholic tradition is to do a daily examination of one's life.

To help you do that, the takeaway gives you a process you can use,
with two simple questions:

1 for which moment of your day are you most grateful? *and*

2 for which moment of the day are you least grateful?

If you reflect on these questions and make them part of your daily prayer - you will get a
clear picture of your relationship with Christ right now.

And you need to do this to see where God may be leading you this year.

So please be sure to get a takeaway before you head home.

Over the next month we will hear more about how we can develop this 20/20 spiritual vision.

As I said, this is going to be a bold series which some exciting opportunities for renewal for you.

Over the next month we will explore our baptismal promises.

We will also talk about how we can see others through God's eyes and how we can heed the call to discipleship and commit to Christ.

Don't miss out on a single week.

Commit to being here every week.

And if you miss a week, you can always catch up on the message by going to our website.

Today, with the words of Isaiah to inspire us and the example of the magi to guide us may we hear God calling us to change and offering us 20/20 vision this year.

Amen. +