

## Epiphany of the Lord January 3, 2021

As I sat and prayed with this Gospel from Matthew for the Epiphany of the Lord, two things jumped out at me. First, “for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel” and second, “they were overwhelmed with joy.”

I wonder what the wise men would have looked like overwhelmed with joy? Did they cry, laugh, hug each other? Dance around and jump up and down? Perhaps they were speechless! How do you act when you are overwhelmed with joy? For me there would definitely be some tears involved and probably some dancing! To be so overwhelmed really can make you feel as if you are not in control of your emotions.

Still though, I wonder what is it in that phrase “overwhelmed with joy” that stirred something in me? I know I have the Good News! Do I act overwhelmed with joy as I should? I have so much to be joyful for! I find myself asking “am I overwhelmed with joy” knowing that I have found Jesus? Or, have I become complacent, taking Jesus for granted? The wise men are a reminder for us to be overwhelmed with joy, just as they were!

We hear lots about shepherds in the readings this time of year. The Prophet the wise men quote tells not of a mighty powerful strong king but a ruler “who will shepherd my people Israel.” To me, a shepherd is a gentle, quiet and patient person who gently coaxes, nudges, teaching and training his flock to go in the direction he needs them to go in. If you have ever tried to shepherd any animal in a particular direction, you know what I mean! Shepherding requires great patience!

It was the job of the shepherds in the Old Testament to provide an unblemished lamb for sacrifice at the temple to be offered up by high priests. Jesus, the Shepherd of Truth, will become that unblemished lamb offered up for all of us. The irony of the great Shepherd becoming the Sacrifice is not lost on us.

The wise men were seekers, searching for the new king, and were rewarded with an overwhelming joy! Can we, in our new family of parishes, become seekers too? What shall we seek? As we go through another period of lockdown and isolation, can we seek out each other? Can we find ways to seek out those that are in need of joy in their lives?

By working for the good of others, giving ourselves away, it is then we in return receive joy. Perhaps in seeking to serve others we will be overwhelmed with a joy so great we are speechless!

See if you can spend some time contemplating what “overwhelmed with joy” means to you. Be unafraid to show others the joy within you. Be unafraid to introduce others to the joy of Jesus!

Take time if you can, to seek out the Shepherd. Remember, you are not seeking out royalty. The Shepherd can be found in those around you, in simplicity, humility, love, kindness, and in joy! Allow yourself to be led along the path that God has planned for you. And, when you feel overwhelmed with joy, be sure to show it and don't be afraid to dance!

*Reflection by Julie de Gouw, Pastoral Minister*

