

## Epiphany Jan. 3, 2021 STM: 8:00 and 10:00

Christmas letters. We receive and write them. Some are short-a few lines. Some are longer-several pages. But when you really think about it, there are three main things that a Christmas letter and the accompanying photo card are meant to communicate:

- My kids are better looking than your kids
- My dog is way cuter than your dog
- And we had the vacation of a lifetime this past summer that clearly outdid your vacation.

There is not much need to say more than this. Once in a while though, a different Christmas letter arrives that tells a very different story than what we are used to reading. I came across this one recently. It was written by a 75-year-old man:

*An anonymous person made a huge investment in our family this year. He doesn't know us, and we don't know him. Personal contact is not allowed for a year; however, we can exchange non-identifiable notes. So, we thought we'd share the following note which we've sent to our doctor to pass along."*

*Dear Donor:*

*I am the recipient of one of the greatest gifts you have ever given—the gift of life. Without your donation, I was given about a year until my bone marrow myelodysplasia (MDS) progressed to deadly acute leukemia. Your stem cell gift arrived in my hospital room on July 4th and after the transplant (infusion) the celebration began.*

*The only information I've been given about you is that you're a 33-year-old male and that you live in the United States. The transplant took only a couple hours and the procedure went well. After nearly three months in or near the hospital, I was allowed to return home with my beloved wife and caregiver extraordinaire. She is a "Saint". We've been married 51 years.*

*I am feeling well. My last biopsy indicated that I'm almost 100% donor (97.3%).*

*I've read all the rules by the National Donor Program on what I can and can't say in this note. Under the limited category of what's "OKAY TO SEND": I am male married, two children, and two grandchildren. I am 75 years old. Initially, I bragged about now being your age, 33, but I was told by a friend I shouldn't be making such public pronouncements since this new age would mean I'm too young to be eligible for Medicare. I'm a retired news correspondent.*

*I want you to know that it is impossible to find words that adequately express my gratitude for what you've given to add to my time on this earth. I feel as though I've lived through a miracle—thanks to your generosity. How wonderful it is to have people like you who give of themselves to help others.*

*So, until we actually meet in person, here's wishing you and your family a Blessed and Joyous Holiday Season. P.S. My wife says she "can't wait to hug you." (Website of Deacon Greg Kandra)*

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, today the Church continues Her walk through the Christmas season as we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord. The letter I just read speaks of promise and hope. Such great hope was provided for this man who would have died without bone marrow from someone who he did not know. The donor gave freely, to no one in particular, just someone who needed help to live. The donor gave freely-no conditions-not expecting something back. The donor gave the gift of life, the gift of hope, the gift of a future to another person.

The Epiphany reminds us that God comes and reveals Himself to the nations. Magi come from the East. They come in search of a king. The Magi were foreigners, yet they were seekers. They sought out this king who had been born under the most unusual of circumstances. And to Him they bring their gifts. They come and honor the One who would provide hope for the world, The One who would give life to the world. This was the promised Messiah that Simeon spoke of last week. This would be the One who would rule over the House of Israel.

Epiphany means "revelation." God comes and makes Himself known to his people. Next week, we will bring the Christmas season to a close with the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, which is another epiphany, another revelation of the divinity of Christ. God continues to make Himself known in our world. Sometimes, we need to look hard enough to find Him. God comes to us in ways big and small. Sometimes God leads Magi to a stable. Sometimes though it is in the most unexpected places that an epiphany happens. Sometimes it is in a hospital bed that God makes Himself known when you find out that a generous act has been done and someone gave of themselves so you could live.

You and I walk this journey of life. We never know where it will lead us. We have begun a new year, a new year of grace. We have no idea where this year will lead us. For we begin this year with the world continuing to suffer the effects of a pandemic. We will hopefully end the year better off. The vaccine provides us great hope. 2021 will be a journey for us. We all have our plans, although we have learned to become much more flexible with plans. Who knows what we will write about in those Christmas letters in 11 months. But may I make a suggestion now about that? How about you include in your Christmas letter the moments where you saw God at work in your life and that of your family. Include Epiphany moments. Sure, write about how good looking your kids are and how cute your dog is. Who knows if you will be able to take that vacation you want. But also, write of how God broke through in your life in 2021. That will mean being open to seeing God and maybe even keeping a journal so you will be ready to write a different Christmas letter for this year.

The author of the letter I wrote, ended it by writing: "Never forget that every day is a gift from the ultimate donor." That is true. Every day we have is a gift from God. Greet each

day as such. Be on the lookout for those moments when God desires to make Himself known to you. The Magi found the Christ by the guidance of a star. May you too come to find Christ, our light, in this new year of grace. Amen.