

Homily for the Feast of Epiphany

If you ask me, one of the great inventions of the last few years has been the GPS...those magical little boxes (built in or standing free) that guide us as we try to navigate to some unknown address or location. For those, like me, who are geographically challenged...and trust me, I still can't find my way around the parish...this little invention saves me more time and anxiety than anyone could imagine.

God, who loves to outdo us in everything, creates the original and never-to-be outdone guidance system. It isn't a machine...it is a star. And this star leads a group of Magi in their search for the child of Christmas who is the savior of the world.

We might want to spend a moment thinking about these Magi, these journeyers from the East. They weren't Kings so much as scholars. They were astrologers who studied star charts and discerned fates in the night sky. Strange choice of characters for the Christmas story considering that the Church and the wider society have always been suspect of astrology. God is never limited by our own prejudices but rather is revealed in and through the strangest corners of the earth.

Now these Magi, who spend their lives studying and reading, researching and speculating, want to know where this star is leading them.

They have checked the prophecies of the past. They know the rumors of a savior. Their study convinces them that this star announces the birth of this long-expected deliverer.

The story becomes more interesting when, in the court of King Herod, one set of scholars is pitted against the other. Herod turns to his own set of wise men who, in the end, aren't much help. The only hint is that perhaps in Bethlehem one might find this new-born King. And so Herod sends them on their way...giving them instructions to "stop back" on their way home and let him know where he might go to worship this king.

Indeed the star leads them where they want to go. It brings them to their point of arrival. And then this becomes more interesting. For these scholars, these Magi, these astrologers who study everything, go into the presence of this child and they do not study. Instead, they adore. They worship this new-born king. They give to this child all that they have and all they possess. And rather than return home by-way-of Herod, their journey is changed and they return home "by another way."

Each one of us journeys through life. And as God provided a guidance for the magi from the East, so God provides us with guidance. But our guidance is not a star. Rather, our guide is Jesus Christ who is light itself.

In a world and a culture that has sadly lost its way and often becomes wrapped up in itself, Christ, our light and guide, reaches out to us and says...journey by another way. Learn to travel a different path. Learn to go home to God by letting God lead us home.

May we who reflect on the story of the Magi as we complete the festivities of Christmas, allow the Magi to become our models. May we follow them to Bethlehem and worship Christ. May we give to Christ all that we have and all that we are. Let the wisdom of these journeyers become the wisdom that guides our own lives. Let us learn to travel another way...the way of Christ who is our Savior and our Lord.