

## HOMILY FOR THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

There is a story told of a man who brought his visiting grandson to church. Apparently the little boy had not been to church for a long time – so he had a lot of questions.

He whispered to his grandfather and said: “What does it mean when they bring up the bread and wine?”

“Well,” said the grandfather, “the priest will take these and make them into the body and blood of the Lord.”

“What does it mean when the priest holds up the book and then kisses it?”

“Well,” said the grandfather, “it means that we have a great deal of reverence for the Word of God.”

Finally the little boy asked: “What does it mean when the priest takes off his watch and puts it on the pulpit?”

“Absolutely nothing, son, absolutely nothing!”

All of us go through life asking questions. What does this mean? What does that mean? And the Gospel today brings with it the same question – does this Gospel story mean anything in our lives? Or, is it just a picturesque tale that makes for a pretty Christmas card.

I can't answer that question for anyone else. I can only answer that question for myself. And for me this story means everything. For this Gospel summarizes what Christmas is all about.

These three wise men – these strangers in a strange land -- teach us that Christmas is about grasping the radical vision of God who came to teach us that in God's eyes there are no barriers, no differences. In God's eyes there are no walls that divide one group of people from another. And in God becoming one with us God invites us to become one with each other. We don't always take that serious but this is the great light that Isaiah speaks about in the first reading. It is the warm light that burns away prejudice and hatred, division and distrust. It is the light that emanates from the star and comes to rest on the child we worship during this most holy season.

The spirit of Christmas often dies quickly because we see it with such a narrow perspective. We continually fail to grasp that the birth of Christ calls us to open ourselves to all those we might think to be different and unlike ourselves. We forget that the spirit of Christmas is not simply a warm fuzzy to get us through the doldrums of winter. Rather, the spirit of Christmas is a radical vision that God offers the world. It is a vision that teaches us that in Christ there are no strangers, no aliens, no one is unwanted or unloved or uncared for. No one is excluded.

If we would have the courage to let the radical vision of God's love find a home in our lives then the star of hope would rise in our hearts and we would learn, once again, what Christmas and Epiphany are all about...the appearance of God's love in the world. And the world will never be the same.