

Homily for Epiphany

It's a beautiful story, isn't it? This tale of the visit of the Magi ranks right up there with Christmas and Easter. It is a story that no one ever tires of listening to. Poets as distinct as William Butler Yeats and William Carlos Williams have wrapped words around the visit of the wise men. Longfellow even gave them names: Melchoir, Gaspar and Balthasar. Countless artists including Botticelli and Fra Angelico have pictured this story.

But while the magic of the story could be seductive, we should be very, very careful not to miss the most important dimension of this story. For this story is about you...and about me...it's about us.

The story of the Magi is the story of faith and life. It is the story of three people who trust God so much that they keep going. It is the story of evil Herod who seeks to destroy not only the journeyers but also the goal of the journey itself. And it is the story of redemption and deliverance...of the three kings who learned to go home by another way.

To have faith...is to be led by the light of God that shines through the darkness. But sometimes the light fades from our sight. And in those moments we confront Herod whose only goal is to destroy us. For Herod is the evil one. And Herod can come in many forms.

He can come in serious illness or in threatening moments. He can haunt us in our weaknesses and in our human failings. He is found in our inability to forgive and create reconciliation. And this king who would slaughter the innocent children is also the one who can tear out our own hearts as we confront the unexplainable and the senseless events of life.

And in these moments in which we seem to be overcome by the evil of Herod, it is easy to abandon the journey of faith. It is easy to cry out in the darkness and let the evil of Herod overcome us. “God isn’t listening....God doesn’t care...I’m not sure that God is even there.” But we cannot allow that to happen for God is with us. God never abandons us. For God is found in the center and core of our hearts. The kingdom of God is within each one of us. And so we cling to our faith in the same way the Wise Men of old clung to their mission to follow the star.

And it is when we are willing to take this risk of faith and confront moments that are so dark, that God will lead us home by another way. For me this is the most magnificent part of the story of this feast. We should be clear...these Magi were destined for death. If Herod had no problem ordering the death of innocent children, he certainly would have no problem killing three kings. But in the surprise of a dream, God

reaches down and saves these wise journeyers by showing them a safe way home...by leading them home by different way.

And I believe with all my heart that those who trust in God will never be disappointed for faith and prayer are more powerful than the “Herods” of our world. And when we least expect it and when we seem overwhelmed, it is God who leads us home by another way.