

## Homily

### Epiphany

January 5, 2020

The readings from Advent and Christmas are full of examples of being given a choice, making a decision and moving forward.

At the Annunciation, Mary didn't hesitate; she said, "Yes," then journeyed to her cousin, Elizabeth. She was already pregnant, stayed about three months, and then returned home three months pregnant minimum. Depending on the route she took, that was at least 120 miles each way.

At the Nativity, Mary and Joseph obeyed the decree and journeyed ninety miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

Today, we remember the Epiphany, where the Magi travel from afar. I don't know where Afar is, but I bet it's a long way from Bethlehem.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, to avoid Herod's fury, fled to Egypt, 90 miles away just to the border with a child.

That's a lot of traveling. These are tough people. They didn't have cars or buses, planes or trains. They walked, or if lucky, rode animals. It was an undertaking to travel during this period of time. There were many hazards; wild animals, criminals, rough terrain, no shelter from inclement weather.

A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.

The shortest distance between two points is a straight line, but a straight line isn't necessarily the best path.

You and I are on a journey, most of us on many different journeys. It all begins with that first step; we are given a choice and make a decision. Those of us who are married first made the decision to get married. Then began the journey to do just that, ending with the wedding ceremony. But it doesn't end there. We decide to stay married. That is something I work on every day.

All of us, right now, are in the process of making a decision, something that is on our mind or something we want to do or need to do. And all of us are on a journey based on some decision we made some time ago.

Some of these journeys are actual, such as the Magi in today's Gospel. Some of these journeys are metaphorical, such as the decision to quit smoking or start working out. Each begins with a decision and ends with some goal in mind.

Some of these journeys are good, as in something that will help us or others. Some of these journeys may seem like they are good, but may not be the best thing for us or our loved ones.

Our take-away from the Advent and Christmas examples of journey, especially today's, is that of making a good decision and doing what is necessary to achieve the goal; finding the new born King under the Star.

The most important journey we all take is our faith journey. We are here today, so we made the decision to take this journey. We do what is helpful on this journey such as in coming together as a community and partaking in this Most Holy Sacrament.

But there is so much more in the details, such as that we ARE a community; we are in this together. I don't think Mary traveled to visit Elizabeth on her own. The Magi didn't come as a company of three; we don't know how many Magi, but I'm sure there were a bunch of people along for the journey.

We encounter many struggles in this process. We struggle to make a good choice; things get in the way, alternative options present themselves. And we struggle along the path, very serious things block our path or try to divert us onto another path.

When horrific things happen, the death of a loved one or scandal or health challenges, money challenges, social challenges, whatever it may be, we have another decision to make. To stay on the path, we may need to improvise, adapt, over-come. We may need to go out of our way to get back on track. We may need to forgive someone. We may need to forgive ourselves.

Whatever happens, we have a loving Father who will not forget us. We have a loving Brother who already did what was necessary to save us. We have an advocate who is always on our side, no questions asked.

In this fallen world, it's hard to imagine a no-strings-attached love that God has for us, but it's true.

He loves us no matter what. And He has given us everything we need to complete the journey; the Sacraments, the saints, creation itself. Everything we need is right here, if we will only look, open our hearts and say Yes, just like Mary did, just like Joseph, just like the Magi.

It will be hard; God never said it would be easy. Just the opposite; He warned us it would be hard, but He is there for us to make our burden light.

Let us pray to Jesus during this Holy Season to bless us with a company of friends to share our journey. Let us pray for a well-formed conscience to make good decisions. Let us pray for courage, strength and wisdom to continue on the path we have chosen. Just like the Magi found the new born King, we will one day see the one true God in the company of all the angels and saints in heaven.