

Homily
The Epiphany
January 7, 2024

Merry Christmas! Happy New Year! Did anyone travel for the holidays? Where did you go? Speaking of traveling, I'd like to address a great injustice that men have been dealing with, well, for all time. Men have the reputation of never asking for directions. We will drive around the world knowing that we will at least end up where we started. We will drive until we run out of gas before we would stop to ask some else how to get where we are trying to go. This is just not true.

It is true that if our wife is in the car with us that we won't ask, but that is only because we don't want to appear weak or unaware. And this is a genetic thing. Our fathers didn't ask, our grandfathers didn't ask and this goes all the way back to at least Moses. If Moses wasn't married, he would have stopped and asked for directions instead of wandering in the desert for 40 years.

The magi also were traveling during the holidays. They were following that star to lead them to the Messiah. We know the magi didn't have wives on this journey. We don't know if they weren't married or just didn't bring them, but we can be sure the wives weren't with them. Why? Because they stopped and asked Herod for directions, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews?"
Matthew 2:2b

We can be sure of something else; we are all on a journey; we are all on a path towards God. And we can take so much from today's Gospel and apply it to our own lives. First, why did the magi offer Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh? Second, what is the significance of the magi traveling from the east?

It is important to understand what St. Augustine meant when he said, "The New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New."

In Chapters 30 through 40 of Exodus, God tells Moses exactly how to build and craft the Holy of Holies. Gold was used to plate the tabernacle, the altar, the utensils, the vestments, the walls of the sanctuary, the ark of the covenant and its cover, the altar of incense, the lampstand, table, and poles, and gold was even threaded into Aaron's and his son's vestments. This was to express how all these items were holy, sacred. Frankincense was an ingredient in the incense used for the burnt offerings of sacrifice. Myrrh was an ingredient in the oil of anointing, specifically for all the items used in the offering and for anointing Aaron and his sons and their vestments. The parallel is that Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant and Jesus, the sacrifice, were also to be properly prepared and were holy, sacred.

Also, these gifts are the same gifts we are to bring, not gold, frankincense and myrrh, but ourselves, the gifts God has given us, our time, talent and treasure. Just as the Israelites offered gold, frankincense and myrrh for the construction of the holy of holies, God gave certain men the gift of artisanship to craft the holy of holies, and they answered that call. Each of us has a unique set of gifts that we are called to share. In doing so, we are made holy, sacred. And those whom

we gift are made holy, sacred. All of us, the Body of Christ, are holy, sacred. When we realize this, it makes us stop, look at ourselves and reconsider who we really are, children of the God of the universe. The same God who spoke with Moses. The same God Who help the Israelites prepare the Ark of the Covenant. The same God Who sent His only Son, born of Mary, laid in the manger, Who became our sacrifice, Who took our sins upon Himself, Who is the New Covenant, whose mother is the New Ark of the New Covenant.

Second, we are all on a journey. Moses led the chosen people out of Egypt and to the promised land. The magi journeyed to find the Messiah. Then, when they found Him, journeyed home. Mary, after her Fiat, journeyed to see her cousin, Elizabeth. The angel of the Lord told Joseph, after the Epiphany, to take Jesus and Mary and flee to Egypt. Jesus was found in the temple when He, Joseph and Mary journeyed to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. We, too, are on a journey, each of us on our own special, unique journey, but all of us heading in the same direction towards the same destination. We are heading towards a place promised by Christ, a dwelling place in His Father's house. Our life is a journey, from our birth to our eventual end. Along the way, we have challenges, we encounter struggles, and then we have choices, we make decisions. Sometimes we take detours until we eventually get back on track. How is your journey going? If you see a light coming towards you, make sure you're not on rail road tracks and that light isn't a train. If you find yourself at a dead end, remember you can always turn around and reset your course. If you seem to take a lot of detours, remember to follow the right signs and remain on the right path.

As we end this Christmas season, we all remember that Christ is the ultimate gift, that all of us have gifts to share. That we, as the Body of Christ, are indeed holy, sacred. And that as we journey towards that eventual end, we have many resources to help us along the way. We have our brothers and sisters, who also are on this great journey. We have the angels and saints who are where we want to go and want to help us get there. We have the Sacraments, especially Reconciliation, to heal us and get us back on track, and the Eucharist, which we will soon receive, to nourish us and strengthen us. This is our life; this is our mission, to journey, to travel, ask for directions along the way. We are all on the same journey, traveling together in the same direction. And God knows this and has made everything available to us. We just need to look around us and realize we are truly holy, sacred, and we are destined for a better place, that place where we will enjoy the eternal banquet in our heavenly reward, if only we follow the straight and narrow path, and remember to ask for directions.