

**For The Bulletin Of
January 3, 2016**

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

From Father Robert

A television commercial a while back sang the praises of the human eye. The commercial portrayed how our amazing eyes can see the light of a single candle in the darkness from one hundred football fields away. That's over thirty thousand feet! In the gospel today, the "magi from the east" followed the light of a star. A light of heaven that guided them. A light of revelation that manifested "the newborn king of the Jews to Gentile wise men. A light of warning that protected this Child from harm until His time had come. Like the magi, we must follow this light *to the* Light. Like the magi, we must offer "the child" homage – the gift of our very selves become the Light of His Presence. A Light that guides, reveals, and warns.

The light of the glory of God's Presence is all around us. Unlike the magi, we don't have to undertake an arduous journey. We need only to open our eyes to see through the darkness. We need only to allow God to guide us by Word, Sacrament, and grace. We need only to heed the warning signs of those who might lead us astray, those who refuse to see the light, those who choose not to give God the humble homage of which God is worthy. The real challenge of today's gospel is that we do not seek the light outside of ourselves, as did the magi, but within ourselves. We do not need to look up to the heavens, to observe starlight, to go on a long journey. The light that guides, reveals,

and warns us is right here among us. It is within us. We are the light that shines forth the Presence of God.

The mystery we celebrate today is that this "newborn king of the Jews" is as presence to us as He was present to the magi who came to do Him homage and offer Him gifts. Just as this "newborn king of the Jews" manifested Himself to the "magi from the east," symbolizing the Gentiles, so does He now manifest Himself to all peoples and all nations at all times. He manifests Himself to us. His Light, however, does not emanate from a distant star, but from within each of us who is open to His divine Presence, open to His saving love, open to His gift of Life.

We ourselves are the guiding light; we ourselves reveal God's divine Presence through the goodness of who we are; we ourselves warn others by the way we live of the danger of closing our eyes to this Light. We ourselves are to be the gift offered to others, a gift that shines brightly for all to see because this "newborn king of the Jews" dwells within and among us. Such a light we behold!

Living The Paschal Mystery

Because God's generosity in offering us divine Presence is so lavish, our response must be just as lavish. God has given us great treasures, two of which are mystery so deep: the gift of the only-begotten Son as the divine Presence which dwells among and within us, and the gift of our own selves being "members of the same body" with the power to manifest that divine Presence for others. Our response can be no less than the total gift of ourselves.

At baptism we become “coheirs” and “copartners” in Christ. We are copartners, therefore, in Jesus’ saving ministry. Clearly, seeing the revelation of Christ among us requires a unique kind of seeing. We do not “look at” the light; we become the Light. We do not simply “see” the glory of divine Presence; we become the glory of that divine Presence. Our gift for others is the Light that shines forth from the “newborn king” Who dwells within us.

As we begin a new calendar year and continue the celebration of the Christmas Season, what questions arise in your thinking and reflecting as a result of hearing today’s scripture passages?

- The light I follow is...It leads me to...
- I search for Christ when...I am the revelation of Christ for others when...
- Like the magi, I encounter the “newborn king” when...The gift I offer Him is...

About Liturgy: Gift of Worship

Each Sunday when the Christian Assembly gathers for liturgy, many gifts are given to God: the gift of time and talent shown in the various ministries; the gift of money and food goods for those in need and the upkeep of the parish; the gift of ourselves to each other by our presence and full, conscious, and active participation. All of this is good. At the same time we must never forget that we gather on Sunday *in response to* God prior gifts to us summed up in the Son and our share in divine Life. Thus our Sunday celebration most of all ought to be characterized by thankfulness for all God has given us and praise (homage) for this God Who chooses to be so intimately present to us.

It is all too easy for our Sunday celebrations to be subtly focused on ourselves. Although we can never be passive at Sunday Eucharist (and our greeting of each other, hospitality, offerings are an important and indispensable part of the time spent in worship), we must never forget, however, that we are there first and foremost to give God praise and thanksgiving. The purpose of Sunday worship is just that: *worship*. Threaded through the speaking and singing, gestures and postures, relating and responding must be an attitude of awe, reverence, and deep-felt gratitude for God’s lavish generosity to us in so many ways. In the end the only lasting gift we can really give God is ourselves in worship and self-emptying service of others.

The Floral Arrangement at the Altar is placed to the Glory of God and in Loving Memory of Dan O’Connor by the members of the O’Connor and Nelms Families.

The Christmas Season Continues

Next weekend, January 9th and 10th, we celebrate the last movement of the Christmas Season as we mark the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. At each liturgy, we will give thanks and praise to God for the Blessed Waters of our Baptismal Font and then experience its blessing through the Sprinkling Rite. These liturgies bring the Christmas Season to its conclusion.

Once again, I want to thank everyone who had a part in making our liturgies of the season so beautiful, those who were seen and heard, as well as those who worked “behind the scenes.” All that you did is a reflection of your love for

God, for our parish, and all those who joined us for the liturgies of the Christmas Season.

Environment Help

With the conclusion of the Christmas Season next weekend, we will begin the process of returning the church to its Winter's Ordinary Time environment. As you might imagine, a great deal of help will be needed for us to accomplish this. You are invited to join the Art & Environment Committee beginning at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, January 11th to help with this. With sufficient help, we should be able to accomplish this in one day. I hope you will join us.

First Reconciliation

On Friday evening, January 15th, the children in our Sacramental Preparation Program will receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time. Please keep them in your prayers as they take this next important step in their faith journey as they encounter the Lord's forgiveness and mercy.

Adult Confirmation

The Sacrament of Adult Confirmation will be celebrated at The Cathedral on Saturday morning, January 16th, at 10:00 a.m. Please keep the candidates in your prayers as they prepare to complete their Initiation through the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Knights of Columbus Dinner

On Saturday evening, January 16th, our Knights of Columbus are hosting a Dinner in the parish hall for all those men who are interested in becoming Knights of Columbus. This is a fraternal organization of men in our parish who are involved in many ministries and outreaches and who are a vital part of

our parish's life and ministry. If you are not a Knight of Columbus, I invite you join us for this evening of fellowship and information. Find out how you can become a part of the largest fraternal organization in the world and join our parish council in the wonderful work they do. Please see the bulletin for more details.

Retirement Celebration for Bev Iacona

On Sunday, January 17th, we will celebrate the retirement of **Bev Iacona** who has been on the Pastoral Staff and served most recently as Financial Secretary. Bev is one of the Charter Members of the parish, its first Faith Formation Coordinator, and has served in practically every ministry of the parish since its inception. We owe her great gratitude for the place she has held in developing our parish, its ministries, programs, and outreaches and serving in so many capacities. We will thank her for all her years of service during the 10:00 a.m. Eucharist that Sunday followed by a reception in the parish hall. I hope you will join us for this wonderful opportunity to celebrate Bev and all she has done. She will continue to be involved in ministry in new ways as she transitions from being a member of the Pastoral Staff.

At the same time, I wish to announce that **Estrella Rusk** has been appointed as the new Financial Secretary and she began her new position on January 1st. We welcome Estrella to the Pastoral Staff and look forward to many years of ministry and service with us.