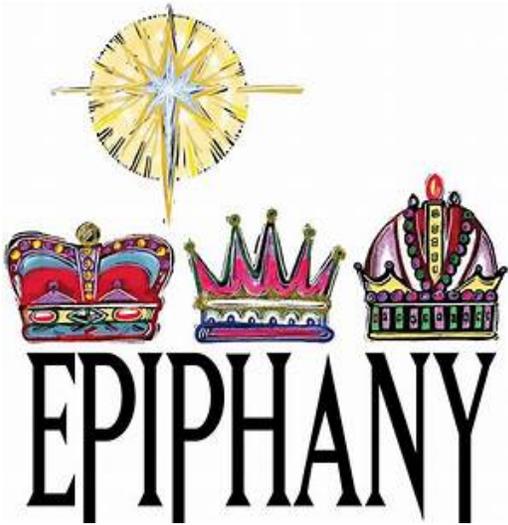


**For The Bulletin of
January 6, 2019**



From Father Robert

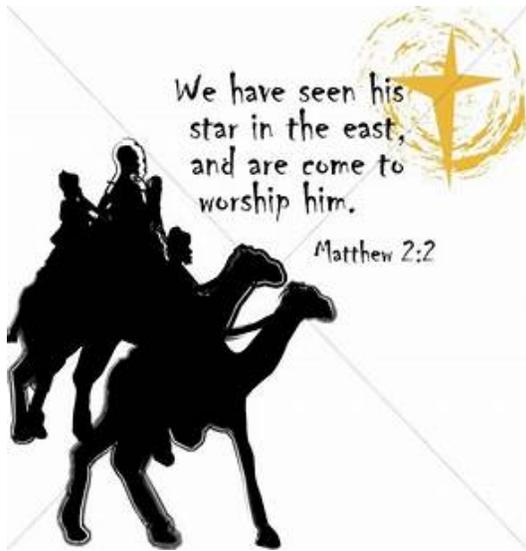
The Feast of the Epiphany is celebrated in many cultures and oftentimes more prominently than Christmas. At a time when many homes have taken down decorations and put away special dishes from the season, we are reminded that there are still celebrations to be had. This story of the visit from the magi is unique to Matthew's gospel and when read on its own terms it can be especially revealing. Often, however, we read this gospel with preconceived notions. For example, the text doesn't say how many magi there were but because they gave three gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, artists, preachers, and homilists through the centuries talk about there being three kings. Aside from fulfilling scripture, the gifts are symbolic, as they were given to kings or divinities in antiquity. Gold is a precious element representing kingship, frankincense a perfume, and myrrh a costly balm or ointment.

And this leads to the term, "King," which is not used in the gospel text.

Instead, the term is "magi," which designated the Persian (modern-day Iran) priestly caste. Thus, Matthew foreshadows the post resurrection mission to the Gentiles by showing Gentiles (Persians) coming to worship the child Jesus. Ultimately, this is a story about Who Jesus is and what His mission will be.

It is also significant that the magi worship the *child* Jesus. Matthew does not use the term infant here for Jesus is no longer an infant. And it's clear from the story that Mary is at her *house*, not in a manger as Luke would have it. Again, when we read these stories on their own terms without importing "what we know" from other stories, a different picture emerges, and that can be a picture that conforms most closely to the theology that the evangelist wanted to impart.

In the story following today's gospel, Matthew tells us of the Holy Family's flight into Egypt to escape Herod slaughtering all the male children in Bethlehem up to two years old. This is a clear indication that the magi visited the home about two years after the birth of Jesus. And the point here is theological. Jesus is brought to Egypt so that the scripture passage might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt I have called my son." So, in today's gospel reading we see the mission to the Gentiles and the universal scope of salvation foreshadowed by the visit of the magi to worship the child Jesus. Salvation knows no bounds. This is a cause for celebration indeed!



Living The Paschal Mystery

Both children and adults enjoy giving and receiving gifts: it seems to be part of the human condition. For the receiver there is an element of surprise. What could it be? Perhaps some anticipation comes with opening the gift and there is a sense of wonder. For the giver there is the joy of generosity, in seeing the look on the face of the one who receives. There is the joy that comes in simply thinking of the other and providing something for the other not because it was earned, but instead because it comes from a place of generosity. Stories of gifts given and received are numerous in the scriptures, antiquity, and history. They come to be part of family and friend lore as well. It's likely that many of us can quickly call to mind gifts that we've given or received. The gifts given by the magi in some way represent or symbolize objects that humanity has to offer. And Jesus is the best that God has to offer. By the conclusion of the gospel story humanity will have executed Jesus, the gift of God, only to have God raise Him up from the dead. This expression of the paschal mystery guides our

thoughts today when the magi present the best of human intentions.

What new insights have you received as a result of reading this column?

- The prophet Isaiah tells us “Rise up! Your light has come.” When have you had the opportunity to be a light for others?
- The magi follow a star that leads them to Jesus, God with us. In your life, how has creation helped you to know God?
- The magi, strangers from a foreign country, travel to the land of Israel and are welcomed into Jesus’ home. In your life of faith when have you encountered different cultures and/or religions? How has this experience changed your understanding of God and humanity?
- In today’s second reading St. Paul proclaims the inclusivity of God’s kingdom where both Jews and Gentiles are welcome. How do you welcome those of different backgrounds into your home or our parish?



Dear Father Robert and Parishioners,
 We are deeply grateful for your financial gift of **\$3,496.85** for the Butte County/Camp Fire Relief Fund. This funding will go directly to the

St. Vincent de Paul Council and Conferences in the area of Paradise and Chico, who are responding to the residents who have experienced the devastating loss of their homes, vehicles, belongings, and more.

The displacement of so many residents is a huge challenge for those who need help and for those who are responding with assistance. You can be assured that your donation of support will be utilized by St. Vincent de Paul to respond to the residents in greatest need.

Thank you again for your generous gift enabling Camp Fire victims to begin putting their lives back together.

Happy New Year!
Sincerely,
Claudia Ramirez, Executive Director
The St. Vincent de Paul Society of
Contra Costa County



Once again I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who do so much to assist in caring for the parish on a weekly basis: those who clean the church each week, arriving very early on Saturday morning: **Alfred Madoshi, Rose Salamanca, Carole Miller, Mency Osborne, and Jean Roberts.** ...those who clean and maintain the bathrooms in both the church and parish hall: **Steve Rojek, Mary Ewing,**

Patricia Britton, Harlan Young, and Fr. Robert.

...to **Dilcia Aparicio** who does such an excellent job of washing, ironing, and caring for the Sacred Linens.

...to our Sacristans and Altar Guild who prepare the sanctuary for the celebration of Eucharist each week:

Peter Degl'Innocenti, Pam and Rich Confetti, Vincent Rodriguez, Harlan Young, Monika Kauer, Cynthia Enrique, Nancy Santos and Rose Salamanca.

...to **our counting teams** who are here every week to count the weekly collections.

...to our volunteers who assisted in the parish office last week:

Melodye Costanza, Rowena Cayaban, Sharon Cissell, Alicia Perez, Yvette Young, Harlan Young, Joe Fanfa, Bev Iacona and Lorraine Lohmeier.

...to our St. Vincent de Paul and Mobile Mall volunteers who transported last week's donations: **Frank Zamora and Barbara Jackson.**

...to our faithful weekly bulletin assembly team: **Dave Costanza (Lead), Carole Miller, Vangie Parrilla, Beth Enea, Richard Enea, Kathy Augusta, Vince Augusta, Sherry Webb and Deanna Ribeiro.**

...to our wonderful Parking Lot Security who kept watch over our vehicles during the weekend Liturgies, Christmas and New Year's Liturgies:

Don Benson, Steve Rojek, Tony Gumina, and Dave Simpson.

ANNUAL REPORT

The Annual Pastoral and Financial Report for 2018 will be given on the weekend of February 2nd and 3rd at each liturgy. All present will receive a printed copy. Every Pastor in the Diocese of Oakland is required by Diocesan Statute to give a “State of the Parish” report to the congregation, reflecting on the year that has been as well as an accounting of the parish’s pastoral ministry and financial standing. The report will also include the Budget for 2019. I hope you will all be present.

