

The Epiphany of the Lord January 3, 2010

Readings: Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

New Year's Resolution

This morning we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany and we once again hear the story of the Three Wise Men who travelled a long and difficult journey to visit the newborn King and bring Him gifts. We hear about how they arrived with their gifts, but their story began much earlier as the Magi studied the stars and compared them to the prophecies in Hebrew scripture that told of the coming of the Messiah awaited by the Jews. They paid attention, stayed alert, and were rewarded; Jesus revealed Himself to the Magi who were Gentiles, that is non-Jews. Jesus came to save all nations, not just the Jews. We hear in our second reading how this was revealed to Paul as well. As you have probably heard in past Epiphany homilies, the word *epiphany* means manifestation or revelation. It can sometimes refer to those times when something new is made known to us, or when something we already know is made much more clear and understandable. I like to refer to these times as *aha* moments. It's like when the little light bulb clicks on upstairs, and suddenly something makes more sense.

These *aha* moments are often just what we need to get us back on track, or to keep us on track, on our faith journey. But we have to look for them and pay attention to them like the Magi poring over scripture and studying the stars. And like the Magi, we have to be willing to act on what we discover and not ignore it. All too often, I am afraid, we receive a bit of revelation from the Holy Spirit and we are too busy to pay attention. Or maybe we hear it, recognize as something useful and interesting for our faith life, but then tuck it away and forget about it. Or maybe we find that what was revealed to us, is too difficult for us to accept and embrace; it would require additional difficulties on our journey.

The Wise Men made a long and difficult journey acting on faith. And each Sunday we make a much shorter and less difficult journey to attend Mass, but we also come based solely on faith. And sometimes we find it difficult to come, especially many of our young people who claim that the Mass is boring. Many claim that they don't get anything out of coming to Mass, but the real issue to consider is how much they put in. If we simply come and go through the motions, without putting some effort into listening and paying attention, we will miss God trying to speak to us and reveal Himself to us. We will miss the *aha* moments God has planned for us.

And so, as we start this new year and develop our list of New Year's resolutions, I would like to pass along a suggestion I heard in an Advent talk by the author and speaker Matthew Kelly. If you consider Mass boring, he suggests that you get a small notebook and bring it to Mass with you each week. Immediately after Mass write in your notebook one sentence about one thing that inspired you or made an impression on you during that Mass. Maybe it was a word or line in one of the hymns that sparked a new insight. Maybe it was something from one of the readings, the responsorial psalm, or from the homily that helped you grow a little bit in faith. Maybe it was something you heard in a new way from one of the prayers of the day or from the Eucharistic prayer. Or maybe it was simply

the decorations or the actions of a fellow parishioner that made an impression on you that day.

Now we could just listen and pay attention without writing in a journal, but I think writing down something at the end of Mass has two benefits. First, it gives you some accountability to yourself. If you commit to yourself to write one thing at the end of Mass, you will be more attentive; you will listen to the hymns, and the readings, and yes, maybe even the homily more closely. Second, writing down that thought will prevent it from slipping away. It's kind of like writing down that very vivid dream immediately upon waking because we know that the details can fade quickly.

Matthew Kelly insists on writing down only one thing each week, not two or three. Try to focus on just one. At the end of the year you will have a notebook with fifty-two insights—it can be a Christmas present to yourself. You can decorate the cover and put a title on it such as: My 2010 Mass Revelations. It will be a treasure filled with fifty-two of your very own *aha* moments for you to reflect upon and review your journey of faith, the journey that leads you here each Sunday to visit Jesus. I can assure you, if you can make and stick with this New Year's resolution, you will not find Mass boring; you will put something in and get much, much more back out.

Deacon Joe Hulway