

Dear Greeters,

*The following is a reflection
on the Gospel for Sunday, 1.7.18 from Celebration
Publications by Jim Auer*

THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

Strange, mysterious creatures, these Magi. We briefly wonder about them when we get Christmas cards picturing them in solemn procession headed for Jerusalem, or standing just outside the stable at Bethlehem, or kneeling inside it. Many people formerly called this the

Feast of the Three Kings because the items they brought were pricey, so it was assumed they were kings who could afford them. It was likewise assumed that there were three of them because Matthew's nativity narrative mentions three gifts. But it's possible or even likely, according to some traditions, that there were more of them. The Eastern tradition favored 12. It's not likely that they were kings either, but rather priest-scholars from Persia.

They traveled a distance of roughly a thousand miles, most likely by camelback, and when they reached Jerusalem were undoubtedly in sore need of a long soak in Epsom salts. Jerusalem, however, didn't even have a Motel 6, and the Magi had no time for that anyway. They were on a mission to find the person foretold in the stars and in the Jewish Scriptures, which they were probably familiar with. So, they stopped briefly in Jerusalem to confer with King Herod and Jewish scholars, who pointed them toward Bethlehem.

By this time, Joseph and Mary seem to have left the stable and found temporary lodging because Matthew records them as entering the house. We can learn something from this scene. Remember that we have read the script. We know how the story turned out. Mary and Joseph hadn't read the story. They were living the story. In a way, they were writing and making the story up as they went along, based on raw, unshakable faith that went back nine or ten months to the



Annunciation. They'd already had their fill of strange events, and here came another one. Who were these strange people who wanted to see their baby? What were their intentions? Could they be trusted? Mary and Joseph did trust, not so much the Magi but God. Over and over, they had to

face being uprooted physically and psychologically. They were yanked out of the little comfort they had to deal with.

Gold, frankincense and myrrh were not random items that the Magi happened to have in their saddlebags. In Matthew's story, they are prophetic

statements. Gold, a gift given to royalty, says, "This child is a king." Incense, used in prayer, says, "This child is divine." Myrrh, a burial spice, says in the words of the old spiritual, "I wonder as I wander out under the sky, how Jesus the Savior did come for to die." At the time, Jesus certainly did not look royal, divine or on his way to death. Nor did he look that way for most of his life. We, who have heard and read the story, know with faith that he was. We're lucky. So very lucky.

If someone were to write your infancy narrative, what would the Magi — or visitors to the maternity wing — bring with them? What gifts would say who you are? There may have been more than three Magi, so you may select more than three gifts, but don't go with 38! That spreads the idea too thin, and it loses meaning. Perhaps make five the limit. Meditating on who you are was a practice Thomas Merton recommended to the young monks he was training. The closer we come to discovering our true selves, the more accurately we see the picture God has of us — and has had for, well, forever.

Whimsical (although accurate) possibilities might include a package of diapers or a soccer practice schedule. Would that convey part of who you are? Perhaps so — especially when inscribed with, "What you do for others, you do for me."

What would the Magi have brought when you were born?



Some Ministry Information:

- *Advent Reflection Booklets will be distributed on November 25th and 26th, after Communion like a second collection.*
- **The 4th Sunday of Advent is also Christmas Eve, Sunday, December 24th.** We will have our regular Saturday Mass on December 23rd at 5pm. We will have the 7:15am, 8:30am, and 10:00am Mass in the morning of December 24th which is the Fourth Sunday of Advent. **We will not have an 11:30am Mass on Sunday December 24th.** We will come back then and have the **Christmas Eve Masses on Sunday, December 24th beginning at 4pm in both the PLC and the Church, the 6PM in the Church and the 10PM in the Church.** **Monday, Christmas Day, will be our regular Mass Times, 7:15AM, 8:30AM, 10AM, and 11:30AM.**
- The Feast of the Holy Family falls on Saturday, December 30th and Sunday, December 31st. **We will not have an evening Mass on Sunday, December 31st which is also New Year's Eve.**
- Monday, January 1st is New Year's Day. There will be a 10am Mass. The Feast of the Epiphany is Saturday and Sunday, January 6th & 7th.
- *Christmas Schedules.— Sign up sheets are on the counter in the Narthex. Whatever team you are scheduled with, we will need all of you if you are in town and available. New Greeters are also welcome to sign up!*
- *The Nativity Scene, “The Crèche,”* will once again be placed in front of the beautiful stain-glass circular window. The chairs that are in front of the stain-glass window now will be placed in the Narthex during this Christmas season.
- There is a handout on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, **a Special Christmas Bulletin.** Thank you for your help!
- Enclosed is the Greeter Schedule from December, 2017 - February 2018. Look for the Greeter Schedule on our website, **www.steseton.com** under “Spiritual Life,” “Minister Schedules”, “Greeters.”

“Now Thank We All Our God With Hearts and Hands and Voices”
to *each one of you* for another year
of continuous dedication to the Ministry of Greeting.

Wishing you much joy and many blessings in the New Year.
Claudia Nolan