

HOMILY FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY – YEAR B

“Follow That Star”

(Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72; Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12)

The 1970 musical *Godspell* presented one song *Day By Day* that rings through my mind during a feast like Epiphany. The verse goes like this:

*Dear Lord three Things I Pray,
to See Thee More Clearly,
love Thee More Dearly,
follow Thee More Nearly,
day by Day.*

Two recent gestures by our webmaster, Rusty Gardiner from La Ronge, intensified that desire within me this year.

First, he gave me a book to read by Francis Collins entitled *The Language of God*. Collins was a geneticist and a biologist who did not believe in God. Collins tried to use science to factually support his atheistic beliefs, and like CS Lewis, this exercise in fact converted him to a theist. His work on the Human Genome project changed his life. The goal of the project was to break the human genetic code, that complex system of DNA which makes up the human being. The awesome, intricate and amazing results of what they found convinced Collins that there had to be a God. In announcing the success of the project with then president Bill Clinton, both men, a scientist and a politician, used the word *God*, to the surprise of many other hard-nosed scientists and politicians. Epiphany had happened once again, for them, but also for me in reading the book. I felt myself motivated to follow more closely the One who created us, to come to see Him more clearly and to love Him more dearly.

Later Rusty sent me ten pictures of the universe released by NASA, taken by the Hubble telescope from its vantage point in space. The pictures were of other stars in galaxies millions of light years away from our own galaxy. They were awesome and breath-taking. They almost shouted to the beholder, “Behold the greatness of our Creator!” Epiphany happened for me once again, and once again I feel myself motivated to follow the One who created us more closely, to come to see Him more clearly and to love Him more dearly.

An atheist is someone who resists belief in a creator or higher power that we call God. We see in the readings for today both attitudes of belief and unbelief. The Magi are open to newness; to a star that beckons; to find out where that star leads and they end up adoring a child whom they accept as the King of the Jews.

King Herod on the other hand is the antithesis to the Magi. Entrenched in his love of power, control and possession, he is a closed person, not willing to change, to explore, to discover someone greater than he. Yet no matter how much he tries to block this divine energy manifesting itself in our universe and in his world, the star continues to beckon, the Magi

continue their journey, and the Christ child is found, worshipped and adored. The Magi return to their own land by another road, transformed and enlightened. Herod is stuck in his own misery, resorting to ever more desperate and deadly methods to hang on to elusive and unsatisfying power and control.

An epiphany reflection by Karl Rahner, an eminent Catholic theologian, was published in the *Catholic New Times* some time back which captures our reticence to believe and to follow the star, the new confronting us. He wrote:

Sometimes we don't want our hearts stirred up. Sometimes we don't want to leave home. We don't want a star moving anywhere. We want to curl up like a cat for a snooze.

Rahner suggests that the kind of ardent restlessness that is the foundation of the Magi's stepping out after the star is not a comfortable impulse. Building on this reflection, Corbin Eddy, in his commentary on this feast, asks, "Is there a star out there beckoning you?" He goes on to assert that like it or not, there is a star out there for all of us. The light of Christ and the transforming warmth of his grace are for all people.

The star is the good out there to be sought, the truth to be embraced. Even our regrets about our weaknesses and sinfulness which can sometimes stir up our conscience could be that twinkling star. It may be a feeling of anger or guilt, or perhaps a sense of loss. Let that not frighten you. Let it not create clouds to hide it from you. Remember other epiphanies in your life, such as the Human Genome project and the pictures from other space. Follow where that star leads and when it stops, go into the house, prostrate yourself and offer your gifts – your heart's adoration, the prayers of your own poverty.

The Eucharist that we celebrate today can be itself an epiphany, an encounter with that Star, a marvelous revelation of the love of Jesus in Word and Sacrament, for those who believe.

May our celebration today be an epiphany that leads us to see God more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.