

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

WISE MEN (AND WOMEN) STILL SEEK HIM...

A couple of weeks ago I was over at the Alba House on Victory Boulevard picking up some last minute Christmas gifts. In fact, it seems that most of my Christmas shopping is last minute! With all the holiday preparation and other things that needed to be done, I was just a little bit stressed on that afternoon. Getting into my car to return home, I noticed a colorful sign by the curb. The sign read: "Wise Men Still Seek Him!" It made me think a little bit.

Perhaps we all could use a little more "wisdom" around Christmas time to understand and appreciate that seeking the Lord is the most fundamental and important quest of our lives. Today, we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany. On this Sunday, we celebrate the visit of the Magi or the "Three Wise Men" to the new born Baby Jesus in Bethlehem.

Most of us know that the Wise Men brought three special gifts to Jesus. Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. Gold-because Jesus is King. Incense, for the Lord is God. And myrrh, a spice used in the burial of the dead, signified that He would someday die on the cross.

A lady once jokingly said to me, "Father, do you know what would have happened if there were three wise women instead of three wise men?" I told her I did not know. She said, "Well, they would have asked for directions, helped deliver the baby, brought practical gifts, cleaned the stable and made dinner!" In any event, the gifts that the Magi brought to Jesus symbolized in a deep way their respect and adoration to the "King of Kings."

Certainly the Wise Men received the grace to recognize that the little Baby lying in the manger was more than just that. He was in fact as the hymn put, "Robed in flesh our Godhead see-hail the incarnate deity." How did they come to see beyond appearances and worship the Lord? Certainly it was the star of faith that helped them! As Saint Leo wrote, "The star beckoned the Three Wise Men out of their distant country and led them to recognize and adore the King of Heaven and Earth."

The star of our Catholic faith shines brightly in a very dark world today and can lead us to discover Christ as well. But maybe for some of us, we have lost our way. The star of faith has been clouded over by our negligence and sinfulness. Yet God is so merciful and patient.

Recently I read about a famous atheist of the nineteenth century. He was not really an atheist but an agnostic. An agnostic is a person who does not know if there is such a concept known as "God." In any event, Robert Ingersoll did not believe in God.

He was a great orator who would stand before an audience, take out a pocket watch, look at it and say, "If there is a God, I dare him to strike me dead within five minutes!" Well, after the five minutes had passed, Ingersoll would say triumphantly, "See. I'm still alive. There is no God!" But a priest had a different "take" on his logic. He said, "What Mr. Ingersoll really proved is that God is too kind and merciful to strike him dead!"

Yes, the Lord is kind and merciful. He puts up with our mistakes, our sins and our stupidity at times. As we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany and enter a new year, let us strive to be wiser when it comes to our Catholic faith. May we always be wise men and wise women who seek the face of the Lord!

*Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome*