

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD “C” JANUARY 2/3, 2010

As I prepared to leave my previous pastoral assignment at St. Patrick in Cedar Falls the grade school children asked me what I might like as a gift. There was only one qualification: it had to be something technological. No icons. No liturgical vestments. (I wonder why?) I told them since I was being assigned to a part of the archdiocese I had never been in and had little knowledge of the city of Ames and the surrounding area, a portable GPS system for my car would be a welcome gift to help me find my way to wherever I might need to go. The school children presented me with a “Garmin.” As I contemplated the mystery of today’s celebration of Epiphany with its symbol of the star which guided the Magi and the technological capabilities of my “Garmin” I saw some connections. For those of you who may also have one of these devices in your vehicle perhaps for you too, as for me, this bit of technology can be a “sacramental” in bringing home part of the message of today’s feast.

Stars traditionally have served as reference points in helping guide people on pilgrimages of various sorts for centuries. The Magi were no exception. We are told they were astute students of astrology, studying the appearance and movements of the stars. One star in particular intrigued them. Like other seers of the time they believed important world events such as the birth of a king were signaled by the appearance of star. Seeing this particular star they set off to the point of its origin. Unlike the Magi, we program a destination into a GPS system. Yet, in both cases a destination is desired. In both cases we receive direction both visual and verbal. For St. Matthew the star represents the light of God’s truth pointing to Jesus. The journey of the Magi reminds us that each of us is on a similar journey—we too, hopefully, journey to deeper and more committed lives of discipleship as each year we relive in the liturgy the mystery of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus as we are given visual and verbal direction in our journey to and with Jesus. The liturgy of the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, the Word of God in the Scriptures, the teaching Tradition of the Church contained in such works as *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* as well as in

authoritative papal and our bishop's teaching, all are "points of interest" and information along our way.

Followed faithfully, a "Garmin" will get us to our destination. So, too, following the star, the Magi arrived in Bethlehem, found Christ, which in turn prompted them to relinquish the tools of their trade-gold, frankincense and myrrh and offer them, and in an act of faith, themselves, in homage to Jesus which in turn transformed them into the first disciples, evangelists and missionaries. In a reflection on today's mystery our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI notes:

Why did the Magi set off from afar and go to Bethlehem? The answer has to do with the mystery of the "star" which they saw "in the East" and which they recognized as the star of the "King of the Jews," that is to say, the sign of the birth of the Messiah (Mt.2:2). So their journey was inspired by a powerful hope, strengthened and guided by the star, which led them toward the kingship of God himself. The Magi set out because of deep desire which prompted them to leave everything and begin a journey. It was as if the journey had always been a part of their destiny, and was finally about to begin. This is the mystery of God's call, the mystery of vocation. It is part of the life of every Christian... When the Magi came to Bethlehem, "going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him"(Mt. 2:11). ...This house represents the Church. In order to find the Savior, one has to enter the house, which is the Church. ...Here is the culmination of the whole journey: encounter becomes adoration; it blossoms into an act of faith and love which acknowledges in Jesus, born of Mary, the Son of God made man...The secret of holiness is friendship with Christ and faithful obedience to his will.

The next time we use a GPS device, think of it not only as technological tool to guide our earthly journey, pause a moment and, like the Magi, say a brief prayer imploring the guidance of the Holy Spirit on the journey of faith. Joyous Epiphany journeys to all of you!