

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD “B” JANUARY 7/8, 2012

Has this happened to you? You spend a lot of time looking for and researching an item to purchase. After purchasing it, you discover it isn't everything it was advertised to be or that you imagined it would be. Despite some initial hesitancy you choose to keep it. Over time and repeated use, you discover that, in fact, the item lives up to, or even exceeds, your initial expectations. Over time the item becomes an essential part of your life. You can't imagine living without it.

Perhaps the Magi, or the Three Kings as they are commonly known, had a similar experience as they entered the house and “saw the child with Mary his mother” (Mt. 2:11).

The Magi were astrologers. They had done their research. They had searched the writings of many of the religious traditions of their day including, as we hear in their conversation with King Herod, the Jewish scriptures. Based on their study and careful mathematical calculations, the unique star they observed portended the birth of a new king. Given their research and the appearance of a unique star in the constellations, they decided to take the risk and follow the course of the star in the hope of finding the subject of their quest. No doubt, based on their experiences and expectations, they assumed that this newborn king would be found in a palace surrounded by all the usual trappings that go with such an exalted state. How surprised, and perhaps initially disillusioned, they were when after their conversation with King Herod in Jerusalem the star eventually stopped over an ordinary house, in an ordinary neighborhood, in an ordinary town and they beheld not a royal court with a queen mother and her princely baby, but a peasant mother and her small boy child. It wasn't what they expected!

The Magi faced a choice. Reject their research, write off the hardships of their journey, return home and nurse their disappointment, perhaps also suffer the ridicule of their respective colleagues and fellow citizens. Or, despite initial misgivings, choose to accept and believe what had been revealed to them by their study and the sight they now

beheld before their eyes, and, despite initial uneasiness, put faith in the person of the Child that lay before them. St. Matthew reveals their choice; “they prostrated themselves and did him homage” (Mt. 2:11).

The faith journey of the Magi, their initial inquisitiveness, their decision to pursue the outer and inner light that called them despite any number of difficulties and finally, the conscious choice to believe in the face of appearances to the contrary models our own faith journey.

Pope Benedict XVI commenting on this scene reflects: “Outwardly, their journey was now over. But at this point a new journey began for them which changed their whole lives... The new King, to whom they now paid homage, was quite unlike what they were expecting. In this way they had to learn that God is not as we usually imagine him to be. This is where their inner journey began. It started the very moment they knelt down before this child and recognized him as the promised King. But they still had to assimilate these joyful gestures internally. They had to change their ideas about power, about God and about man, and in so doing, they also had to change themselves... They had to learn to give themselves—no lesser gift would be sufficient for this King. They had to learn that their lives must be conformed to this divine way of exercising power, to God’s own way of being. They must become men of truth, of justice, of goodness, of forgiveness, of mercy... They will have to ask: How can I serve God’s presence in the world? They must learn to lose their life and in this way to find it. Having left Jerusalem behind, they must not deviate from the path marked out by the true King, as they follow Jesus.”

The Magi offered traditional kingly gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh and even more valuable gift. They offered their hearts and lives in service to this newborn King. Today we are invited once again to do the same.