

Commentary to the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.

Solemnity of the Epiphany: The Journey



Something monumental was taking place. Pagans, magi, who studied stars and were convinced that stars told a story to men, saw a new star. They had never seen a new star before. Stars told them about the world. This new star was telling them that the world was being renewed. Great heroes, great people had stars or were stars, or even constellations looking down on men. This new star had to belong to the greatest of people. It was looking down on any who would be willing to learn its message. The star was moving towards the west. So the magi set off from their lands in the East on a journey. Did any of them wonder if they would be able to complete the journey? We don't know, but we do know that they and their retinues traveled together. Perhaps they were supporting each other in their determination to complete the journey. They were convinced that the star they saw was announced a new king who would be the King of Kings had been born somewhere in the land of the Hebrews. So they went to Herod's Court. They did not find the King there, but they did learn that the Jews once had a prophet named Micah who said that the ruler of the people would come from Bethlehem. Sure enough, the star was going in the direction of Bethlehem, leading them to the place, the house scripture says, where Mary, Joseph and the baby were. When they left the Holy Family, they were pleased not just that they had found the King, but that they made the journey.

Twenty hikers gathered early in the morning at the trail head outside of Brekinridge, Colorado, waiting for the guide. On their way they had seen the top of the mountain, Mt Quandary, but now they were too close to see anything other than the trail and the forest. The hikers were between 16 and 55, all in fairly good shape. They were from the East, New York to be exact, and knew very little about hiking up a 14,000 foot mountain in Colorado. So they hired a park ranger on his day off to guide them. At first

they started off with a brisk pace, full of enthusiasm, but an hour into the hike most were panting from the effort as well as the altitude. Some weren't sure they could make it to the top, but they supported each other, encouraged each other, and kept following the guide. Then they crossed the tree line and could see the bald head of the Quandary summit. More encouragement was needed for even the strongest of them, but they continued the journey to its conclusion. They stood on the peak and could see most of the Eastern Colorado Rockies. There was Mount Evans. And when they looked carefully to the south, they saw Pike's Peak. It was beautiful. They left very happy, not just from what they saw, but for how they completed the journey. Sure, they could have paid a lot of money and hired a small plane or a helicopter to take them through the Rockies. But that wouldn't be the same. They would never have appreciated the peaks if they had not undertaken the hike, the journey.

We are all on the journey of life. Like the magi, we have a sense of where we need to go, but we cannot see the destination. Like the hikers, we know the peak is up there somewhere, but we cannot see it.

We have a guide. It is not a star. It is not a Park Ranger. Our guide is Jesus who leads us in the direction our lives need to travel. But the journey is difficult. Sometimes we want to quit. Sometimes we are exhausted. But like the hikers in Colorado, we encourage each other, we support each other. And the Christian community, our Church community, helps us complete the journey. What is it that we will find when the journey is over? Will it be a baby? Will it be the summit of a mountain? We don't know, other than whatever we come to, it will be beautiful. You see, we are journey with Christ to the Father. We are journeying to the One whom the philosophers called the culmination of All Truth, All Goodness and All Beauty. We are journeying with Christ to heaven.

The journey itself is wonderful. For during the journey of our lives we continually come upon new experiences of God. Sometimes we experience Him in the wonders of His Creation, in the woods, the mountains, the oceans, the lakes. Sometimes we experience Him in the wonders of His people, those who care for others, those who radiate the Kindness of the Kind One, those who are on fire with His Love. And sometimes we experience Him within ourselves. "Were not our hearts on burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the scriptures to us?" the disciples on the road to Emmaus exclaimed when in Luke 24 they realized they were walking with Jesus. "Were not our hearts on fire when we knelt before the Blessed Sacrament during the retreat, during the Mass, during Adoration?" many of us could add.

The goal is wonderful whether it be a newborn King, the summit of a mountain, or the glory of heaven. But the journey itself is amazing.

We walk together with the Lord as our guide. One of us here, another one there, gasps, “I can’t make it.” But we won’t let them quit. And we have absolute trust that they wouldn’t let us quit either, for the Christian community demands our care for each other. We need to complete the journey as the One Body of Christ. And we care for all we meet on the road of our lives. This Teen reaching out for help, that elderly man needing company, that poor man needing food, those children in Africa needing medicine, all are on the journey of life with us. The Lord places many people in our company. Caring for them is essential if we are to complete the Journey He has set for us.

May I walk with you? Will you walk with me? We need each other. We have to begin now, our guide is calling us to follow Him up the path.

In 1857, John Henry Hopkins wrote a Christmas carol for the Epiphany. Perhaps he was only writing about the magi. Or perhaps he was writing about our journey:

Star of wonder, star of night! Star of royal beauty brightwestward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy Perfect Light.

Fr. Joseph Pellegrino