

Feast of the Epiphany 1-2-11

Good to pray with you today as we begin the New Year. I am aware that there is a Bowl Game right now which we are missing. (Are we missing a Bowl Game right now?) Fortunately, there are 35 bowl games this year, including such classics as the Meineke Car Care Bowl, the Chick-fil-a Bowl, the Little Caesar's Pizza Bowl, and my favorite: the San Diego County Credit Union Poinsettia Bowl. (Don't miss that one!)

So, we're all giving up something to be here right now: a football game, sleep, TV, an errand, bacon and eggs at the Diner, an hour of Facebook. And that's what we learn on this Feast of the Epiphany: God is found by those who seek him. God is found by those who think that God is more important than anything else.

Which brings us to the Magi. There really were Magi; they were political/religious advisors to the king of Persia, which is now Iran; they have trudged 1000 miles through the desert to try to find the newborn King. The Magi have fallen down along the way; they have gotten lost, taken detours; they have gotten tired. But they got back up; set their sights on the King.

Our manger scenes always picture three Magi arriving in Bethlehem (maybe that's all the statues we can afford!), but I like to imagine that 25 started out. Five Magi got homesick and turned back....three got into a fight....four wandered off from the group...nine Magi got bored, tired of the journey; they settled down in Baghdad...the last one? He stopped to watch the San Diego County Credit Union Poinsettia Bowl! Only three wanted to find Jesus more than anything else.

Jesus is found by those who search for him. Every night the Magi would gaze up toward the star and try to follow it. "God, wherever the star leads, we will follow; if it's cloudy, we will wait. We trust in you God." You and I have to take steps toward God: we can call those steps some kind of spiritual practices. Sunday Mass is just not enough in our society. Without a personal prayer life we will get lost; we will make little progress. I have been there.

We listen to Matthew's fantastic story, and wonder what actually happened. Were there really Magi? Would the Virgin Mary's eye phone have caught their picture? We do know from history that

when the Roman Empire came into power, that real Magi from Iran traveled nine months to Rome to bow down before the Roman Emperor and promise their obedience. Matthew would have known that, and perhaps he was trying to say, "THESE Magi got it right: they came to Bethlehem and bowed down before the real King!"

Who knows? What matters is that every morning that you and I are lucky enough to wake up, that we say, "Jesus, help me to see you today. Jesus, show me the right steps to take. Jesus, help me to give you my best and to stay on the right path today." Then, there are not three, but hundreds, thousands of Magi—you and I among them.

After Mass today, please take a moment to enjoy our new outdoor Nativity Scene. The Magi have traditionally been named Balthazar, Caspar, and Melchior. But the three Magi statues outside are inscribed with new names: "purpose," "patience," "peace." Great virtues for life's journey!