

Rev. Dorothy White - January 3, 2021

Events occur in all of our lives that confront and sometimes confound normal as we have experienced it. The last nine months have provided us with stories and experiences that have redefined our lives.

In today's Gospel we have the unfolding of a series of events that help to define this season that we call Christmas. As we walk into Epiphany we will no doubt continue to reel from the impact of new realities in our lives that have folded since last March. If we are not careful we can be so focused on yearning for what was until we miss what is unfolding before us. So, with this in mind, let us look and listen for ways in which this ancient story can be relevant for us even now.

The ancient story speaks of travelers from the East whose observations of the stars led them to Judea in search of a new born king. They came to pay homage -- to acknowledge that one worthy of worship and adoration had been born. King Herod heard about this birth and the visitors from the East. He secretly sent for them to learn what they knew.

Insecure, easily intimidated Herod encouraged these visitors to search diligently for the child and send word when they found this new born King. Herod said to these seekers that he would like to know the whereabouts of this child so that he too could come to worship him.

Scripture goes on to say that the star led the way and they found the child and its mother Mary. They knelt and opened their treasures of gold, frankincense and myrrh -- and did just as they intended. Now typically when these verses are the basis of a sermon the focus is upon either the star, King Herod, or the treasures that are given. But for today, let us focus on two aspects of this story. The journey **to** the child and the journey **from** the child.

The journey to:

A star -- they observed

They trusted what they knew
They took a chance

They went to the capital city
They asked for directions

Upon arrival they were overwhelmed
Entered the house and shared what they had

The journey from:

Warned in a dream -- they listened and returned another way

Richard Rohr quoting D.H. Lawrence: *You can do whatever you want with a belief but an experience does something with you.*

All spiritual knowledge is recognition not cognition. (Richard Rohr)

You cannot be grateful with your head

You will **look** in new - impossible ways.

St. Augustine: *God has many the church does not have. And the church has many that God does not have.*

God is not a being; God is being itself (Acts 17)

Transformed people transform people. Richard Rohr

When you encounter the Holy -- you are never the same

You show up -- broken, wounded, uncertain, confused, insecure and searching and you leave looking for the broken, the wounded, the confused, the insecure and those who are searching because now you can affirm from experience that God can be trusted.

All great spirituality is about letting go... Richard Rohr

A poem about perception and world-view:

Two Headed Calf

by Laura Gilpin

Tomorrow when the farm boys find this freak of nature, they will wrap his body in newspaper and carry him to the museum.

But tonight he is alive and in the north field with his mother. It is a perfect summer evening: the moon rising over the orchard, the wind in the grass. And as he stares into the sky, there are twice as many stars as usual.

I grew up in an environment that said, You are not welcome here. You and those you love are not good enough to experience the realities of life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness. But I was blessed with parents who constantly reminded me and my siblings of God's narrative about our lives.

A freak of nature? Someone who is less than? While serving at St. Mark's I have learned from some of you that you have been companions on the journey of being excluded and treated though you were fodder. But today I remind you as I remind myself, that if you open your eyes even your wounds will serve a purpose.

Your journey to Epiphany may unfold in unexpected ways -- yes even on a perfect evening. But beloved if you open your eyes -- if you open the eyes of your heart -- you will see in ways that embrace your uniqueness. When you leave the place of the Epiphany's event and embrace the mystery of your experience you will be compelled to go home by another way. And if you dare to trust God's leading you will even see the familiar in a new and life giving way.

Open the eyes of my heart Lord -- I want to see you...