



Come and See!

Week of January 8, 2023

The Word ...

Behold, the star they had seen at its rising preceded them...
They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house
they saw the child with Mary his mother.
They prostrated themselves and did him homage.
They opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and
myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod,
they departed for their country by another way.

Pondering the Word ... *"They departed for their country by another way."*

We know the story: Herod, in his narcissistic fear and paranoia, plans to kill this "newborn king of the Jews." Anyone who threatened his power was fair game. These Zoroastrian priests we call the Magi—the Wise Men—likely know little about the nasty politics of the Roman-occupied Jewish state but assume a king would be born in a palace. Makes sense.

But they don't let their assumptions get in the way. They follow the source of their wisdom and find the child and his mother ensconced in a simple abode. They worship him and present their gifts. They listen to their dreams and depart for home by another route so they don't have to report back to Herod. Unfortunately, we again know the story: that didn't stop Herod's evil actions.

I'm intrigued by the image that the Magi's route home was different from the journey they had taken to find Jesus. I wonder if the trip back was more arduous, less convenient; maybe it took them longer and was a more dangerous trek. And when they finally did return home, what difference did this journey make in their lives and in the lives of their kin? What changes did this newborn King bring about for these dedicated seekers?

Living the Word ...

Each year, Christmas comes and Christmas goes. For many, the consumerism and hubbub of the season block the awesomeness of the Incarnation event. That's why I love the Feast of the Epiphany, the Feast of Paying Attention. I ask myself: how will my encounter with God Incarnate change my journey? How will I respond if the route I'm to take this year is less convenient, more arduous? What if my goals and resolutions take longer than I expect? What if I'm called to take steps that challenge my comfortable, well-worn way of doing things?

My personal experience meeting Jesus through the Ignatian Exercises did indeed change the course of my life, and I am reminded that I encounter God Incarnate, not just at Christmas, but every day. And yes, occasionally, these encounters pose a challenge to my comfortable way of life. I bring my humble gifts to lay at Christ's feet, but the value of the gifts I receive in return cannot be measured. So, I continue to seek.

How will you seek God Incarnate this year?

Personal Reflections and Ideas ...

Mon, Jan 9: *Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized... "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness"* (Mt 3:13-17). What does Jesus mean? Purification is part of many Jewish rituals, and some sects at the time—the Qumran, in particular—used water as expiation for sins. **Reflection/Provision:** I think Jesus chose to be baptized to show his solidarity with humanity. Some elders came forward to be baptized by John, but many did not, setting themselves apart from the flock. Later this week, we read about Jesus being tested, so he can be for us the “high priest” who allows us to confidently seek God’s mercy. If you tend to focus on Jesus’ divinity rather than on his humanity, spend time with Mark’s Gospel (we will be reading it on weekdays in ordinary time this year). Try to imagine what Jesus, the human, might have experienced. *“...He came to share your plight, your fight, your night, and point you toward tomorrow”* (Michael Moynahan, SJ).

Tue, Jan 10: *“In ‘subjecting’ all things to him, he left nothing not ‘subject to him.’ Yet at present we do not see ‘all things subject to him’”* (Heb 2:5-12). **Reflection/Provision:** Well, that explains a lot! At present, we too do not see all things subject to him. Over the centuries, humanity has made great strides in some areas; other areas are sorely lacking...maybe even worse. For as we imagine that more things are subject to us, we tend to crowd God out of the picture. This is a fool’s errand. The sooner humanity heeds God’s message of universal love—i.e., the sooner all things are subject to Jesus—the sooner we will experience heaven! Look around your life today. Are there things you try to control without God in the picture? Even if these things are loving and good, you can’t do much on your own except allowing yourself to be subject to the Spirit. God’s been doing the heavy lifting for a long time now. Hand your burdens over to God.

Wed, Jan 11: *“Let us go somewhere else, into the neighboring towns, that there too I may make my proclamation; for it is for this purpose that I went forth”* (Mk 1:29-39). Most of the hoopla swirling around Jesus was due to his curing the sick and driving out demons. But that’s not why Jesus came. Not to perform physical miracles, but spiritual ones. We hear, *“Jesus came proclaiming: ‘The proper time has been fulfilled and the Kingdom of God has drawn near; change your hearts and have faith in the good tidings.’”* This was and still is Jesus’ purpose. **Reflection/Provision:** I wonder about the people Jesus healed: How many of them thanked God and then went right back to their lives? How many of them changed their heart? Let’s ask ourselves: Do I take God for granted, or expect God to grant my every wish? Just look at the great things God has done for me! Have I changed my heart?

Thu, Jan 12: *“Take care, brothers and sisters, that none of you...may grow hardened by the deceit of sin”* (Heb 3:7-14). **Reflection/Provision:** The author of Hebrews is referring to falling prey to the deceitfulness, the attraction of sin, but we can also grow hardened by the pervasiveness of “the sin of deceit.” We hear of politicians, celebrities, and religious leaders flat-out lying, seemingly with impunity. We may say, “Nothing shocks me anymore,” but that’s not a good place to be. The author also tells the community to “encourage each other daily.” If you’re hardened or apathetic about what you see happening in the world, seek out “God friends,” not to commiserate on bad news, but to encourage one another to call out deceit and stay true to the Good News!

Fri, Jan 13: *“We have received the Good News just as our ancestors did. But the word they heard did not profit them”* (Heb 4:1-5; 11). **Reflection/Provision:** This verse has me thinking: Did the ancestors hear the Good News as it was intended or did it become too convoluted, too difficult to follow, too rule-bound? Did they not profit from the Word because of their own hard-heartedness—we hear that a lot—or was the Word they heard not spoken to them with love, hope, and encouragement? Ask yourself: How did or do I hear the Word? Am I “profiting” from what I hear? (BTW, this is NOT about any “prosperity” gospel you may hear preached!)

Sat, Jan 14: *While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners sat with Jesus...“Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners”* (Mk 2:13-17). **Reflection/ Provision:** This reading used to pose a dilemma for me: I always want to be at Jesus’ table, to dine with him, to learn from him, but I don’t want to be “sick” all the time! So, when I read the words of Blaise Pascal, I understood: *“There are two kinds of people: the righteous who believe themselves sinners; and, the rest, who believe themselves righteous.”* The truly righteous will always be at Jesus’ table. Not due to sickness, but to humility. Reflect on this today.