

## **Living the Word**

### **The Epiphany of the Lord / B**

First Reading — You shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow (Isaiah 60:1-6).

Psalm — Lord, every nation on earth will adore you (Psalm 72).

Second Reading — The Gentiles are copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6).

Gospel — The magi were overjoyed at seeing the star (Matthew 2:1-12).

**January 7, 2018**

Have you ever experienced an “epiphany” while sitting in mass and feeling like a reading or a homily was just for you and it related directly to something you were going through? A few weeks ago, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, I was at mass with my mom, who was awaiting a diagnosis from a serious health procedure. In that week’s gospel, the angel visited Mary (which happens to be my mom’s name) and said “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.” The two of us exchanged looks feeling that this message was just for her. In talking to fellow parishioners, I know others have experienced this phenomenon. We have the ability to experience “epiphanies” with a small “e” that we relate to our own history and circumstance all the time.

Matthew’s gospel this week paints the picture of the capital “E” Epiphany complete with Magi, gold, frankincense, myrrh, a troubled king who would later order the murder of innocents and cause the Holy Family’s exodus into Egypt. All of these features of the Epiphany were familiar to Matthew’s Jewish readers. They knew well the story of the first Exodus, the murder of the firstborns, and Isaiah’s prophecy that God’s glory would shine in the darkness above Jerusalem attracting kings from afar who would bring riches of gold and frankincense. Matthew’s Epiphany related directly to his audience’s own history and circumstance.

What are we to make of other gospels’ different ways to introduce Jesus as the Son of God? Luke paints Jesus’ birth in a humble manger; Mark starts at Jesus’ baptism by the hand of John the Baptist; and John’s gospel introduces Jesus with beautiful poetry of the Word being made Flesh. Could the gospel writers simply have had their own divine revelations that made perfect sense to them and their audiences? Could it be that epiphanies are custom-made for the listener? While different on the surface, what all of these gospels have in common is the arrival of the Divine into a secular world; a Light punctuating the darkness; Hope overcoming fear. It’s what my mom and I needed to hear that day sitting in mass: “Do not be afraid, Mary.” On these dark and cold days of the year, let us keep our ears and hearts open to hear the Epiphany that is meant just for us--related exactly to our own history and our own circumstance.

*-Carrie McGillen*