

II EPIPHANY 2010
SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

ROMANS 12.6 ST. MARK 1.1

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All of the Gospels for the Epiphany Season are about appearances...appearances Jesus makes to different people at different times. His appearances are conveyed in ways the people are most likely to understand and get the message about who Jesus is...the Son of God!

The epiphanies of Jesus really begin when he was born on Christmas Day. An angel appeared to shepherds watching their sheep. The shepherds were Jews. They knew about angels and understood that angels were God's messengers. They heard the message the angel brought...Jesus our Savior is born. And many angels sang the hymn we memorialize in the Mass...Glory be to God on High.

Then a star appeared to mysterious strangers from a far away country. The strangers understood stars. They studied them. This was no ordinary star...it was brighter than any star in the sky and it led them to the baby Jesus. The gifts the strangers brought tell us who Jesus is: Gold tells us Jesus is our King; Frankincense tells us Jesus is our God; Myrrh tells us Jesus is our Savior who died for us so we could be put right with God.

What about Jesus the adolescent boy, who wandered off from his parents? When Mary and Joseph finally found him, he was in the Temple talking to the doctors of theology, doing his Father's work. We also need to be doing God's work.

The Baptism of Jesus, our Gospel reading today, marks the beginning of his public ministry. When John baptized Jesus, the skies opened up and the Holy Spirit appeared like a dove. It was God's own voice that calls Jesus his own dear Son whom he loves. Jesus would take his Father's love and show how much he loved us in his words and actions.

John's baptism was intended to get people to turn away from their sins and start over in a new relationship with God. But John's baptism could not forgive sins. Jesus did not need to get baptized...he had no sin because he was God. Jesus chose to be baptized and accept death as the final payment for our sins so we could be forgiven.

The baptism of Jesus ultimately points to our own baptism. When we are baptized, we begin a new life in Jesus. We become part of the Body of Christ...the Church. We are filled with the Holy Spirit who guides and strengthens us every day of our lives. Our lives are changed forever. Everlasting life isn't just a possibility; it is a fact here and now.

The Epiphany Season is really a walk through the entire life of Jesus. His life is full of epiphanies...appearances...that show us who he is and what he has done for us through his life, death and Resurrection.

What we can learn from the Epiphany Season is how we can be good epiphanies...good appearances...for Jesus. What about the appearances of others in our own lives? I can think of the many people who influenced my decision to become a priest. What about the people who have been epiphanies in your life? How should you respond to their appearances?

Saint Paul reminds us that each of us have unique gifts that help build up the Church and help support each other. We need to pray to God every day to help us use those gifts correctly. If we pay attention to what Paul is saying, we can see how the appearances of others in our lives have been epiphanies bringing us closer to Jesus.

Now let's go out and be the best possible epiphanies for Jesus to others.

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