

EPIPHANY 2010
SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH
FATHER JOHN ALTBERG
MATTHEW 2.1



THOSE THREE KINGS WERE REALLY NICE...THEY BROUGHT PRESENTS...AND THEN THEY TOLD JOSEPH AND MARY TO GET OUT OF TOWN WITH THE BABY...THEY HAD TO GET OUT BECAUSE THE NASTY KING HEROD WAS KILLING CHILDREN...SEE PAPA, HERE'S A PICTURE OF HIM...HE LOOKS REALLY BAD...HE WAS HORRIBLE...A THEN SIX YEAR OLD GRANDSON POINTED TO HIS CHRISTMAS BOOK TO PROVE THE POINT...! YEAH ADDED HIS YOUNGER SISTER...WE EVEN SAW IT IN THE MOVIE TOO...

Their enthusiasm was infectious and reassuring!

Over dinner we talked about their having just seen **THE NATIVITY STORY**, a motion picture released a short time before...they were captivated by the movie and remembered that it matches the details in our remarkable crèche into which the Three Kings have now arrived.

WHERE DO YOU THINK THIS STORY CAME FROM?, I asked.

IT'S IN THE BIBLE perfunctorily replied their older brother...*I'VE READ IT...*

AND WHY DID THEY BRING PRESENTS? I ventured...

WELL, replied the younger brother, BECAUSE THEY SAW THE STAR AND THEY WANTED TO SEE BABY JESUS...AND SO THEY CAME WITH MONEY...AND FRANKINCENSE...AND...MYRRH...CAUSE JESUS WAS THE KING BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT ANGELS SAID.

This compelling conversation took place a couple of weeks prior to that Christmas...it was instantly obvious the conversation would be recounted for a very long time.

Retelling tonight underscores that some of our most compelling lessons come from children...the four Sundays of Epiphany...'showing Jesus' will bear this out.

Commence with the NATIVITY...recreated right in front of us...the crèche...it is, in itself an epiphany, for it 'shows us' in three-dimensional physical detail what happened. It is one of the most effective teaching tools imaginable.

The crèche is central to our Christmas Eve Children's Mass...children showing and telling the Nativity story as they place each figure in the scene. For the children it is their personal epiphany. For the adult participants it is a special epiphany as it becomes apparent how much children really know and teach us

Epiphany calls us to consider what has been shown to us during Christmas now concluded. Yes the tree has been taken down, the decorations stored; the secular New Year commenced...new demands have succeeded Christmas frenzy. We now ask ourselves, what did we see, what did we learn...what was SHOWN to us...? What special gifts did we give and receive that will cause us to forever recall the reason for Christmas...?

One of the startling statements I often hear is CHRISTMAS IS REALLY JUST FOR CHILDREN...that generally/sadly means the infectious and reassuring enthusiasm of childhood has been lost or suppressed. If you hear such a statement it means there exists an opportunity for a personal epiphany...showing what happened at Christmas and why it's always important...for everyone.

Take another, closer look at the crèche tonight. What will we do with what we know about what we have seen? Epiphany opportunities are endless...the story IS for everyone...WHAT WILL WE SHOW...WHO WILL WE TELL...?

