

The Feast of the Epiphany B January 8th, 2012 – Fr. Gerald Haemmerle

We celebrate the feast of the Epiphany today. The word epiphany means manifestation, and so the feast is the celebration of the manifestation of Jesus the whole world. Today we remember the manifestation of Jesus to the Magi, tomorrow we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord, when the clouds opened and the Father announced that this was his beloved Son. Yesterday the gospel was the third epiphany, when Jesus worked his first miracle at Cana, changing water into wine.

But today we want to think about our gospel reading, Jesus revealing himself to the Magi. At our Catholic Men's Fellowship this past week, we did our Lectio Divina, the gospel was read, and after some reflection we all mention the word or phrase that struck us, and then we repeat the exercise. The line that first struck me was the line, "Go and search diligently for the child." But the second time the line that struck me was the final line, where the Magi went back "by another way." It seems to me that the call of every Christian is to search diligently for the child. We spend a lifetime doing that. As youngsters our parents help us with that, teaching us to pray, taking us to church. As we grow up we are prepared for the different sacraments, especially the Eucharist, which draws us closer to the lord. For the rest of our lives we continue to search for the lord, trying to make him more real. When we finally find him, our lives should change, we can't go back the same way, we have to find another way, we have to live another way.

This past week we finalized our Lenten program, making some changes. We are going to have three Sunday evenings with three different saints. The first evening with St. Charles Borromeo, the second with Thomas Merton, and the final evening with St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. Reflecting on them this past week, I thought of their diligent search for the lord, and how, after finding him, their lives changed dramatically, they had to go "another way."

With Charles Borromeo, it was the death of his brother when they both were in their twenties that made him realize how fleeting was this world, and he decided to give himself entirely to the lord, dedicating the rest of his life in service to the lord and the church. Thomas Merton was a brilliant but lost orphan searching for a home, and after entering the gates of the monastery of Gethsemini, his life changed forever. Elizabeth Ann Seton was a mother of five who lost her husband while recuperating from illness in Italy, and through the influence of a Catholic family she came to believe in the real presence of the lord in the Eucharist, and her life changed forever.

Once we really search for the lord and find him, our life changes, we can't remain the same, we have to go "by another way. I am sure that many of you would say that you have not had that dramatic moment of finding the lord, causing you to change your life forever. For most of us it is not dramatic, but it is a slow process, it is coming to church week after week, not always feeling that you got much out of it. It is struggling with prayer, as most of us struggle. It is preserving, never giving up. Once in a while I hope we take the time to look back on our life, and notice that you have come to know the lord a little better, and that your life is moving in a little different direction.

One of the men in the CMF told us of a particular nativity set in Oakwood, on the corner of Patterson and Schantz. Leading up to Christmas the people who live there painstakingly move the figure of Mary and Joseph a little closer to the Stable each day, they arrive on Christmas eve. For the next 12 days the Magi are moved a little closer each day, arriving today. Tomorrow they will be moved away from the stable, in a different direction. This is a beautiful metaphor for our life and our faith. Each day we take a few steps in the right direction toward our lord. And when we find the lord, we must in another way.