

Epiphany is calling us to make a decision

Epiphany 2018

Sometimes you need to be a scholar to fully appreciate what is written in the scriptures.

Since I am not a scholar I rely on commentaries of the Sunday readings.

One of these commentaries notes that the two-fold summons—"Arise Shine!"

is the feminist form of the verb...which suggests that the city of Jerusalem is being addressed.

For years Jerusalem has been downtrodden and enshrouded in darkness,
it is now called out of this desperate state.

But the light into which it emerges, is not merely the light of a new day,
or even a new era of peace and prosperity.

It is the very light of God...the glory of God.

And by extension, this day is not just about God revealing himself to all humanity.

Today—Epiphany—is all about God revealing himself to each and every one of us...

such that we recognize that we all have the dignity of a child of God—

that we are not merely part of the passing world...

but that we are part of a kingdom that has no end.

And now that God has revealed himself to us we have a choice.

We can accept that presence and change our ways,

or to rebel against that presence and strive to keep the status quo...to act as if nothing happened.

Paul is the perfect example of our choice.

Early in his life Paul had an epiphany.

He was on his way to Damascus and Jesus Christ revealed himself to Paul in a very real way.

So much so, that Paul was struck blind.

I think there is a little symbolism there, as Paul was forced to see things differently.

In time Paul realized that the Gentiles were part of God's kingdom.

For centuries it was known that the Hebrew people were the chosen people...

the people God chose to work through.

But now there was a realization that all people, Hebrew and Gentile alike,
are part of the kingdom of God.

For Paul this realization became his life's work—and for that he was richly rewarded.

However, not everyone accepted this—

and there were some who fought hard to maintain the status quo.

I might add that for us as a Church we cannot hold our heads too high...

it was not that long ago that it was widely believed that only Catholics would be in heaven.

This is why the feast of Epiphany is so important.

From the very beginning, the wise men's presence at the birth of Jesus

was an indication that Jesus did not just come for the Hebrew people.

That he was the Savior of the whole human race.

When they first saw the star the wise men had a choice,

they could act on the significance of that star,

or they could sit back and work, and work hard to maintain the status quo.

They chose to act on the star's appearance, and for that they were richly rewarded—

seeing first hand the King of Kings.

This story is a story of outsiders who see the truth, and are richly rewarded...
and insiders, who are blind to the truth, who work, and I might add—work hard
to maintain the status quo. And for those actions they become blind.

The light is shining for a reason. We need to determine what the light is telling us.

There is a story I would like to share with you... apparently there was a gathering of all the stars.
All the stars had spoken of their importance, and what they have done for humanity...
except a tiny one that had not yet even being discovered.
Initially, the other stars laughed at it... as it had not done anything for humanity,
but the little star said in reply.
“My contribution is really very critical, for I keep them awake!
I remind them of mystery, of the unknown, and what has yet to be discovered.
My being so hidden lures them further into the skies, to the wonder and grandeur of God—
who is keeper of all things in the heavens and on earth.
I want them to know they have yet to discover things—
and that there is so much mystery out there.
Perhaps if they will remember that there is so much mystery out there--
they will realize that there is just as great a mystery that is within them.

What does the star on this Epiphany challenge us to do?

What is the mystery within us that have yet to discover?

I find it very interesting that the wise men returned home by a different route.

Not just because they did not want to encounter Herod.

They went home by a different route because they had been changed
by meeting the one who is the source of all light.

They were no longer satisfied with the status quo, they had risked much in the journey,
and they were rewarded with the gift of wisdom—
the recognition of what was truly good and what was genuinely evil.

After that initial encounter they were not the same.

This is the question we are facing today. What does the feast of Epiphany challenge us to do.

If you were to ask me—Epiphany is all about making a decision.

2000 years ago the wise men saw the star and they were richly rewarded.

30 years later Paul saw the light and he was richly rewarded.

All through the centuries Christians have seen the light and they he been richly rewarded.

30 years ago I was faced with the same decision.

Do I work, and work hard just to maintain the status quo,
or do I listen to that light that is within me—calling me to priesthood.

I thank God all the time that he gave me the strength and courage
to accept my calling to priesthood—
and for that I have been richly rewarded.

Today we are all being asked,

“The Light of Christ has been presented to you,
what will you do different today, that you did not do yesterday?”

Ian and Lalaine, today you are faced with that same choice.

Today your child will be baptized,

and all of us in this Church will see the light of Christ fall upon your child.

And for your child, and each one of in this church will be richly rewarded.

Your challenge, indeed all of us, is challenged to reflect on what baptism means.

Does it mean that we can allow the status quo to be maintained,

and therefore nothing needs to change?

Or does it mean that each one us will return home by a different route,

because we have all been touched by the light and richly rewarded.

The light of Christ, the light that we see on this feast of Epiphany

is a foretaste of resurrection, of power and life.

This light cannot be contained...just as the Word of God cannot be contained.

The light slips in wherever there is an opening

and slips away from anyone who attempts to grasp it

and use it for their own ends.

In this way, on this feast of Epiphany, we need to embrace this light,

and if we do we will be richly rewarded.

We cannot afford to allow the Status quo to continue.