

## **Epiphany 2020**

by Sr. Michele Bisbey, CDP

Matthew 2:1-12

Good morning and Happy Epiphany,  
or as my family called it “Happy Little Christmas”

The reading that we just heard from Matthew’s gospel  
involves mysterious characters puzzling responses to situations.

The Magi  
those exotic  
non Jewish characters  
from the East  
saw a star at its rising.  
These life long searchers took huge risks to follow that luminary.  
They had no idea about who or what they would encounter along the way.  
They had no idea about who or what they would find at the end.  
Following that star meant they could only travel in the dark  
both figuratively and literally.  
Yet, these foreigners allowed themselves to be open to the unexpected.

When Herod asked  
about the One the Magi sought  
the chief priests and teachers  
knew right away that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem.  
They had been preparing all of their lives for the Messiah to come,  
and here he was.

Wouldn’t you think that at least one of them  
would have asked the Magi if they could go with them  
to find the Messiah?  
But not one of them did.  
They didn’t allow themselves to be open to the unexpected.

The distance from Jerusalem to Bethlehem was a short 5 1/2 miles.  
Bethlehem was a small town.

They knew that the child would be less than 2 years of age.  
Scripture scholars tell us that there would only be 20- 30 boys  
under the age of 2 at the time.  
He would not have been hard to find,  
but none of them looked.

None of them allowed themselves to be open to the unexpected.

Our Provident God communicates with us all the time.

But if we don't allow ourselves to be open to the unexpected  
we will miss God's self revelation.  
We will miss Providence.

The Magi set out to see royalty  
and unexpectedly found themselves  
kneeling before a baby born of indigent parents  
in an out of the way place.

Their hopes and dreams were realized in the most unexpected way.  
They were transformed by the experience.  
The text describes their transformation by saying  
they returned home by a different route.

Today we will participate in an annual Epiphany tradition.  
We will bless this house, our home.  
The initials C+M+B  
along with the current year  
are chalked on the doorway.

The initials have a twofold meaning.  
They stand for the traditional names attributed to the Three Magi—  
Caspar,  
Melchior, and  
Balthazar—  
but they also stand for the Latin phrase,  
"Christus mansionem benedicat,"  
which means "Christ bless this house."

Our homes are places of comfort  
and we hope that all who come through the doors of this home  
will always find a warm welcome.

But Pope Francis has continually challenged us beyond the comforts of home.  
He calls us to move to the periphery—  
to have the courage of the Magi  
and step out of our comfort zones  
to visit,  
to be present,  
and to accompany and provide for those in need.

One of the ways we've tried to respond  
to the Pope's call throughout the Advent season  
was the collection of items for the homeless.  
This weekend those items were packaged  
in a kind of blessing bag.

At the end of this liturgy when we bless the house

we will be invited to take the blest chalk  
to mark and bless our own comfortable dwellings,  
but also to take a number of the blessing bags  
to share with those in need that we might meet along the way.

Like the Magi,  
like the priests and the teachers  
we have a choice to allow ourselves to be open to the unexpected.  
We have a choice to step out of our comfort zones and go to the periphery.

We have a choice to remain the same  
or to open our hearts,  
to open our eyes to see the light of Christ in others,  
to walk with those who are searching,  
to make a home for those who are in need.  
Will we risk opening ourselves to the unexpected?

The Magi laid their gifts before the Child.  
Better than the gifts they gave  
we're those they took away.