

Homily for Epiphany Sunday

Recently, I came across the following “holy humor” that fits in with today’s feast of the Epiphany – that is when the magi, the Three Wise Men, came to adore Jesus, the newborn King. Do you know what would have happened if it had been Three Wise *Women* instead of Three Wise Men? 1) They would have asked for directions. 2) They would have arrived on time. And, 3) They would have helped deliver the baby.

Now, of course we’re all familiar with the passage we heard about in today’s Gospel. And, as I was imagining this whole scene unfold in my mind, it occurred to me just how motivated these magi really were. I mean, they traveled from such a great distance just to see this supposed king, whose star appeared in the sky announcing his birth. I mean, they really wanted to find Jesus, and were willing to seek Him out. At the same time, I was thinking of Herod, who the magi stopped to visit first. As a jealous ruler, Herod wanted to destroy any threats to his throne, no matter the cost. So, he asked the magi, who informed him of this “competitor”, to seek out and find this “newborn King of the Jews”, and then let him know where he was, so he could destroy him... I mean, so that he too could “go and do him homage”.

In the end, of course, we know that the magi kept seeking Jesus, and they found Him. And their lives were changed forever. They didn't go back to Herod – they went home by a different route. Herod, however, didn't find Jesus. And His life didn't change. He just stayed miserable – and made other people's lives miserable too.

As Scripture tells us, “the one who seeks finds”. And the converse is also true – the one who doesn't seek, does not find. That word ‘seek’ is a very interesting word in the Scriptures. It literally means something like you “crave, pursue, or go after something with all of your might; you require something as a vital necessity in your life”, without which you cannot live. In other words, if your dying of thirst in the desert, you desperately seek for water.

In light of this, the question that comes to my mind is: *How* are we looking for Jesus? Are you seeking Jesus in such a way that you're going after Him with all your might, because having Him in your life is an absolute necessity? Or, are you a bit more like Herod, who was curious about Jesus, but really didn't invest much of Himself in seeking Him out? In fact, Herod only wanted to find Jesus for a selfish purpose – to eliminate any potential competition. And so, maybe we approach our faith in such a way that we're just looking for Jesus to give us good fortune, to heal someone we know who's sick, or to help us with our problems.

Now, there's nothing wrong with asking God for that which we need in prayer. God delights in blessing us with that which we most truly need. However, if we're really going to find Jesus in our lives, then we have to seek Him out! And I'm afraid that one day a week at Mass isn't going to cut it. Oh yes, Mass and the sacraments are extremely necessary in our lives of faith. But seeking Jesus in such a way that we actually "find Him" requires that we do so with all our might. It requires spending quality time with Him each day in prayer. It requires inviting Him into our important decisions. It very well could require doing things like giving up TV shows or music that is inappropriate, avoiding people who drag us into gossip, or intentionally going out of your way to help someone in need.

My friends, Jesus desires that we continually seek Him who is the fount of grace, love, and life. Jesus is not playing "hide and seek" with us. Rather, we need to seek Him in each and every circumstance in our lives – in traffic, in the grocery store, at Mass, when disciplining children, at school, on vacation, at work. And by doing this, we will come to find Him, and the strength, peace, forgiveness, and whatever else we need, to find our deepest fulfillment in this life and the next. God bless you.