

Epiphany

January 6, 2019

St. Patrick's Church

All of us as children, at one time or another, played the game of “hide-and-seek.” There is a certain thrill for a kid in thinking that she or he can become invisible, unseen by those searching (1). Some nine years ago I visited the home of a couple who had just given birth to their second child. The mother welcomed me and took me to her and her husband's bedroom, where the crib was. I said a prayer over the newborn Cleo. Then the mother and I returned to the main room. The older child, then about three, had hidden from us. His Mom and I called him by name. We then began to search for him. Suddenly Maddox jumped out from underneath the dining room table, with peals of delight and laughter as he disclosed his hiding place and became clearly seen to his Mom and me.

Our Scriptures begin today, bursting out with peals of exuberant joy: **“Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you.”** Yes, St. Patrick's, our Epiphany feast celebrates that the hiddenness of God's plan is now brought to light to *all*—yes, *all!* Jew and Gentile alike—in fact, no one is left out—God's light bursts forth. Like a child's squeals of delight when found, the Magi burst into joy and adoration seeing the infant Jesus. Yes, the Magi stand for all of us. With Epiphany, there's no hiding from this wondrous gift of the infant Jesus—God becoming one with us.

There is a rich tradition in Latin American countries, and within Hispanic communities within our nation, of the “King cake.” On El Dia de los Reyes, “The Day of the Kings,” a cake is particularly baked for this day, January 6th. A small plastic baby Jesus is hidden somewhere in the cake. The figurine of the Baby Jesus is buried within the dough, signifying how the infant Jesus was hidden from the wicked plans of King Herod. As pieces of the cake are cut, the slicing knife represents the peril which the wicked King Herod posed to the Infant Jesus.

When a person gets the piece of cake which has the figure of the plastic Jesus hidden in it, there's great excitement and celebration of God's hidden plans coming to light.

Our Christmas scenes—in the apse and the stable scene—well, they're both idyllic. They're peaceful. A segment of the Christmas story, however, is left out. In the background, there are also the “bad guys”—King Herod, who at that time was Rome's puppet king, and his breed. Already there is a plot to put the infant Jesus

to death. It's a menacing forecast that this Jesus will meet a violent death. Even in the Christmas story, there's a hint of the Calvary to come. Yes, the knife slicing the King cake is a sign of the danger.

Nonetheless, Friends, this Sunday is all about the light being made manifest. It's all about God's hidden plan being made known to all. The Magi stand for all those from far away nations. They stand for all of us who have an inner restlessness. As Pope Francis ended his Epiphany homily two years ago, "The Magi experienced longing. They were tired of the usual fare."

So many are tired of the usual fare, aren't we? The Magi never gave up on their search. They lost their bearings when the star went away for a time. They even tangled with the "bad guys" who wanted to put the infant Jesus to death. In fact, they are the patron saints of civil disobedience against a tyrant: They did the opposite of what Herod told them (2). Oh, those Magi "from an unknown land": "Their odd dress, differently colored skin, and unintelligible tongue" made them suspect by many, no doubt (3). But, they kept up their long search.

So many are tired of the usual fare, aren't we? May we keep on the search, even when we're lost along the way. Like the Magi, may we find the One for whom our heart aches. May this Jesus be the light who bursts forth deeply within us. Then, like a small child at the end of "hide and seek," may we squeal with delight and closeness, as we have found the One who loves us...and saves us.

(1) I am very indebted in this homily for the insights by Barbara Reid, O.P., in "The Hidden Revealed," in Give Us This Day: Daily Prayer for Today's Catholic—January 2019 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2019), pp. 74-75.

(2) See Serene Jones @SereneJones (January 3, 2019).

(3) Barbara Reid, pg. 75.

General Intercessions

Epiphany 2019

For the Church, that we might remain faithful in our search for the Christ and offer him homage by the witness of our lives; we pray to you, O Lord--

For our Diocese of West Tennessee, on the 48th anniversary of our founding today, on this Epiphany: that the light of Christ might renew and heal us, and for a wise choice of our new bishop; we pray to you, O Lord—

For those who, like the Magi, search for the truth; we pray to you, O Lord—

For all who are suffering from the cold; and, for the most vulnerable among us, especially the homeless, the ill, and the elderly; we pray to you, O Lord—

As the Holy Family, after the Epiphany, became refugees to Egypt because of Herod's wrath—for our true care for refugees and immigrants in our midst, and worldwide; we pray to you, O Lord—

