

From The Pastor

Blessings and grace to you as we begin the New Year. I pray it will be a happy and holy year for all of us, filled with the promises and prosperity of the Lord himself. Using the very ancient blessing read on January 1 for the feast of Mary, Mother of God: 'May the Lord bless and keep you. May the Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you. May the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace'.

It is a blessing to be a blessing. Thank you to so many of you who sent me cards and gifts for Christmas. I am very grateful for your kindness to me, and most appreciative of your generosity. You are very thoughtful. I am also grateful for those who spent time and effort to decorate and prepare the Church for Christmas. The Church looks wonderful. I am glad we were able to have so many new faces come and lend a hand. You did a fine job. Many commented on how nice the Church looks. A high word of thanks goes also to the choirs and their director, and all who helped make our liturgies reverently festive. It was a fine effort by all.

Another word of thanks goes to all who so generously made an offering at Christmas. Our collection was as good or better than last year, despite the economic downturn. As my mother would so often say, 'God will bless you.' In regards to our collections, I direct your attention to the note in this bulletin regarding electronic deposit. The most efficient and secure way to make your Church offering is by check or by direct deposit. This gives us at least two ways to track and post your donation. As you can appreciate, we will gladly receive all cash offerings; however, they are the most vulnerable to suspicious behavior, and if lost nearly impossible to track. Thank you for your goodness to the Lord through your Church giving.

Today celebrates the feast of the Epiphany. This is a theological feast that reveals the divinity of Jesus, and the universal gift of salvation. It is the fullness of Christmas in the realization and acceptance that the human child of Mary is also the long awaited divine Messiah.

The themes of the feast are many. The Three Kings or Wise Men are named mostly by time and legend. They serve as agents for the revelation of the child as the Holy One of God. Not true kings in the royal sense, these men are seekers of truth. They were what we would call scientists, or astronomers today, who sought to understand the workings of the universe. They sought a higher understanding, and in so doing were rewarded with the witness and revelation of the Favored of God who was sent to save the world.

Another theme of today's readings is that of glory. Seen in both the first reading and the gospel, glory is a word that also reveals. In the first reading, Isaiah calls for the people to cast off their misery and gloom and rise up in splendor. 'Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you.' In the gospel, the glory of God is shown in the star that leads the Wise Men, and these same men see the glory of God in the Virgin's child.

What is glory and what is the glory of God? Glory reveals and makes known the hidden richness of something. We glory or revel in the wonder and magnificence of something. You could say, for instance, that children give glory to their parents when they exhibit the best qualities of virtue learned at home. We glory in things of great beauty that cause us to see beyond the beauty to a larger truth of goodness or human dignity.

We say that Jesus is the glory of God. Why? Jesus reveals and makes known to us the hidden and unseen goodness of God. Jesus glorifies God in that he perfectly reflects the fullness of what God is. God is perfect love, unity, and light. The life and death of Jesus makes real and visible for us what this means in a literal and concrete way. We could talk forever about a good and loving God and not really ever know for sure if our words were true. Now in Jesus, we can see the reality of the love of our God made real and visible in the person of Jesus.

As Jesus is the glory of God, we are all called to be the glory of Christ. That means that our lives should make visible the goodness of God given to us in Christ Jesus. When a person is giving glory to God, they are acting in a Christ like way. Mother Theresa or Pope John Paul II are recent examples; or perhaps Father Damian Malakia who was recently canonized a saint. Their lives gave visible evidence of the glory of what is means to be fully human in the model and example of Jesus, who is God.

What is your glory? What hidden goodness may lie within you that has not yet been revealed to the world? What might keep you from letting your light shine? Every age needs to see the glory of God, and the best way to do that today is to imitate the goodness and light of God modeled by Jesus.

One way to reveal God is to be a blessing to others. We all need to be blest. Bless your children by telling them that you love them and are proud of them. Bless a lonely neighbor with an unexpected visit, telling them you value their presence in your life. There are thousands of ways to be a blessing. Realize first that you are blest by God. God is pleased with you and claims you as his own. In the New Year, be a blessing to others as often as possible and the glory of God will be made known.

Father John Esper