



Dear Friends,

The Epiphany - the visit of the Magi or three Kings, the manifestation of the Lord to all the nations - this is our celebration on this last Sunday of Christmas. Today we recall an event in the life of the Christ-child that contains extraordinary drama and great faith. The account contains a long journey, a guiding star, three unique gifts, danger, a dream, an escape, and a baby in jeopardy.

The magi symbolize human searching. They go in search of truth and on finding Truth born in a stable, lowly and poor, give him homage, presenting him with gifts fit for a king. Truth is not found in a palace. It is not found in a king exerting power over his subjects with fear and threats, but in a baby, defenseless and weak, pure and full of love.

Herod is threatened by this child. Why is that? Is it because he cannot see in the child born of Mary the face of Truth? Can he not see that this child manifests what every person – himself included – seeks: unconditional love, acceptance, security, faith in that which is bigger than ourselves, faith in the fullness of life? The Bethlehem child reveals all this.

Children. So often they can see and reveal what we adults can miss. I was reminded of this Christmas week during a funeral Mass. On Thursday, December 29th, we buried Michael Belt. Mike was just 51 years old; his death was sudden and unexpected. Tears and great sorrow were to be expected, numbness and pain, too, especially among his family. What I saw manifested that day, though, was faith and trust by two of the youngest in attendance, Mike's sons, Lucas, 13 and Hayden, 11.

When I met with Lucas, Hayden and their mother, Michelle, to plan Mike's funeral, I asked if they might want to consider serving at the Mass since they are both altar servers. I expected some reluctance. What I learned was that they had already talked it over with their mom. They wanted to honor their dad in this way and honor him and the Lord they did.

Lucas and Hayden served the Mass with great reverence. Though it had to have been difficult for them, they served with dignity and love, missing nothing. They even showed a cousin – serving with them – what to do. Their trust in God's care was visible for all to see. Their faith in the fullness of life that the Christ-child came to offer was visible for all to see. In thirty years I cannot recall seeing faith so beautifully and powerfully expressed. Their dad would be proud.

As we conclude the Christmas season this week, we might ask ourselves, "How is my faith in Christ, especially in the drama of life's difficulties, manifested for all to see?"

Peace and blessings,

Father John