

January 7, 2024

Daily Reflections



GIFTS WE'VE BEEN GIVEN

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Today's Second Reading and Gospel

Brothers and sisters: you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for your benefit, namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation. It was not made known to the people in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

EPHESIANS 3:2-3a, 5-6

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews?" ... They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Reflection

Having listened and reflected on these readings of the Epiphany of the Lord, what played across my mind were the many beautiful images of the crèche on cards and displays, and in churches across the globe. Allow yourself a moment to do the same ... is not a sense of peace settling within you?

A few years ago, I went to Midnight Mass at my childhood parish in Sidney, Ohio. After Mass, my sister Molly and I drove to the courthouse where a crèche was covered in the light snow that had fallen while we were in church. It was breathtaking because the stars had broken through the clouds, and it was easy to capture the awe and wonder of that night so long ago when the magi had arrived to pay homage to the newborn king of the Jews. As we stood there, silently in prayer, it was a moment of merging the past and present in the liminal place of grace.

Reflecting on the magi, so many pieces had to hold together for the safety of our Lord. The magi listened to the nudging within them to bring gifts for the King, to ignore Herod's edict to return and tell him where they found the newborn, and as they returned home, they did so by a different route.

Pondering this series of events, it reminds us to listen to the Spirit and respond so as not to be a barrier to God's grace working through us. I'm also drawn to the gifts brought by the magi; while we may not have expensive gifts to give, we have something even more valuable – the gifts we've been given by God. It begs the question – how are we using our gifts? How are our gifts furthering the reign of God as a way of paying homage to the birth of our Lord and Savior? And are we trusting what we discern as we listen for God's whispers for which path he is beckoning us to travel?

Finally, I don't want to end this reflection without a few comments on the second reading from St. Paul. In this passage from Ephesians, we hear Paul speaking about how God entrusted this ministry to him as he understood, more clearly, his role in God's redemptive plan. Paul understood this as not something for himself; it was for God's people. As Paul relied on God's grace for his ministry, so must we. Let us all pray for God's grace and wisdom as we live into the ministries to which God calls us.



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For Pondering

- Recall the various crèches you've seen during your life. Which ones were the most poignant? Why? Spend some quiet picturing this image. How does it speak to you today?

- What are the gifts you've been given by God? How might you use these gifts in new and creative ways?
- Let God know of the grace and gifts you desire.

For Prayer

*O Giver of all Gifts,
may we recognize the gifts we've been given in one another.
May we allow the space and time
for the gifts of others to flourish this day as we share our gifts.
Amen.*

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