

THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY January 6, 2012

Theme: Another Way Home

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Unless you're waiting to celebrate Serbian and Orthodox Christmas on Monday, you've probably taken down the Christmas tree and packed away all the decorations for another year.

The house may look a little bare, but you may be glad to be getting back to "normal", whatever that may be.

But here's a question at least part of the scriptures may pose for us today: has our celebration of Christmas this year changed us or touched us in any way?

Are we any different because of our celebration of Christmas this year?

Two places in the scriptures lead me to this question.

First, in the Hebrew text from the Prophet Isaiah we heard:

**Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem!
Your light has come,
the glory of the Lord shines upon you.**

So far so good, a proclamation of the Christmas mystery: the Light of the World has come, Christ as dawned on the world.

But then the prophet seems to say with this light comes a responsibility, a duty:

**See, darkness covers the earth,
and thick clouds cover the peoples;
but upon you the LORD shines,
and over you appears his glory.**

**Nations shall walk by your light,
and kings by your shining radiance.**

In other words, we have seen the Light, now how are we going to light up the world with it?

The second scriptural insight is at the very end of the Magi story and at first glance, perhaps, offers very little:

**And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod,
they [the magi] departed for their country by another way.**

The obvious first meaning of this text is Magi took another road home so as to avoid the jealous madman, King Herod.

But a second meaning might be that they went home different than they came, changed by what they experienced on the journey, by their encounter with the new born King and his mother, even by their run in with King Herod and his entourage of advisors.

The fact that the Magi dared to cross Herod and take another road home was testimony to the fact that they were indeed changed by what they experienced.

What about us now: did our celebration of Christmas this year in any way change us?

Are we in any way different because we have once again “decked the halls” heard the “glad tidings” story of God enfleshed among us? Did some detail particularly hit us this year?

Were we moved or touched by anything we experienced or saw or heard during our family or personal celebrations that especially remains in our memory or impacts our hearts or captured our imaginations?

For me this year, several times I was moved to know that the Christmas story is being caught by a new generation of Christian believers.

First, on Christmas eve we had the Children's choir sing at the early mass, but specifically the Responsorial Psalm was sung by a young lady of nine or ten years old.

She strode to the pulpit with the confidence and poise many an adult would struggle to muster and she proceeded to sing the psalm before a packed church with beauty and grace. As she finished, I almost got teary eyed thinking, the story will not die; it will be told to a new generation.

Similarly, my own family has a treasured story we tell every Christmas of an incident that happened many years ago when mom and my sister prepared a small pillow for a school manger scene.

It involves the miraculous finding of tiny satin ribbon for the pillow.

In recent years mom has asked for a volunteer to tell the story.

This year, what to my wandering eyes should appear, but my eleven year old, red haired, all-boy, nephew Joey's hand shot into the air.

Without missing a beat or a detail he passed on the family's treasured tale.

I leave this Christmas with confidence the story will go on; it will be told to and by a new generation of believers.

For that reassurance I am grateful.

What about you?

What did you see or hear or feel or sense this year?

How did the message and celebration of Christmas change you?

Do you, like the magi, go home from this Christmas by another way than you came?