

Solemnity of the Epiphany
January 7-8, 2023/ Cathedral of Saint Paul
Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3,5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

Go and search diligently for the Child.

Waiting...watching...hoping. If you are waiting for a package, perhaps you have surmised that technology is a mixed blessing! Tracking numbers are equally a blessing and a curse! With the recent storm, I knew it might impact the parish bulletin delivery, produced off site and shipped from WI! To me, it is a vital document produced weekly and relied upon, both for our liturgical celebrations as well as useful parish information.

We are ably assisted by a former Cathedral staff member who, thanks to the wonders of technology, continues to edit our bulletin from another state! By Thursday afternoon, I was worried. Our bulletin company rep assured us that the boxes had been signed for and delivered. Huh?! They were indeed sent to the Cathedral- but in St. Joseph, Missouri! The best technology still fails occasionally. Plan B- overnight delivery!

As believers, we waited patiently during Advent and were rewarded with birth of our Savior. In truth, waiting is good for us. Our penchant for efficiency has reduced the good that anyone sees in waiting, in seeking and finding. Just plug in the address and let the computer do the work.

By contrast, the wise men diligently searched, traveling many miles by means of a star. Herod had told them earlier, "Go and search diligently for the child." They sought signs, they discerned and reacted accordingly. Nothing was handed to them, though they did not operate alone. They discerned the assigns all around them. And so should we. It reminds us that the world does not revolve around us or our immediate needs, perceived or real. Today, the searching for Christ gains new significance.

We all know that Herod had ulterior motives, selfish and conniving as he was. Yet, his admonition could be applied to us. How diligently have we searched for the child? How much effort have we put into to looking for the signs of the Lord working in our lives or in the lives of others? When we see the three mysterious men from the east traveling by means of a

star, their response was based in wonder and awe, not fear. Coming upon the Savior of the world, they worship in humility, bearing gifts.

In this ancient feast dating to the beginning of the 3rd century, our attention today is drawn to the divine dignity of the Christ Child, who is the Messianic king of the world. The universality of God's salvation in the New Jerusalem, which is the Church, finds expression in our second reading, proclaiming that "the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel."

In art, the adoration of the magi appeared earlier and far more frequently than any other scene of Jesus' birth and infancy, including images of baby Jesus in a manger. It started in the Catacombs, where one can see today the earliest known depiction of the Magi (mid 3rd century), an understandably faded image of three men approaching a seated Mary, with Jesus on her lap.

By the fifth century, Christian art had spread from catacombs and sarcophagi and the magi began to appear in the mosaic decorations of the earliest basilicas, such as the amazing one in Ravenna pictured at the end of today's liturgy guide. Balthassar is shown with a long brown beard; eventually he would be identified as an African or Moorish ethnicity. Melchior is a clean-shaven youth. In time, Gaspar became the grey-haired man who kneels before the babe in countless Renaissance images.

Today, may we learn from the example of the Magi, and diligently seek the Lord, not waiting for faith to find us. We are called to be active participants in the work of our own salvation, made possible by the birth of our Savior. Come, let us adore.