

Forming Good Stewards

Good stewards are formed by other good stewards!

Please make sure this is distributed to the **pastor**, to the other **priest** and **deacons** in the parish, and to the **person who produces the bulletin**.

Bulletin Bites

January 6, 2019

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

“Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage.” Matthew 2:1-12

Option 1

“And you, Bethlehem, . . . from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.”

The men who came from East of Jerusalem, in the region of Iraq or Iran, to find “The newborn king of the Jews” were not Jews. They studied the history of the cultures of the world, including the Israelites. Their observations lead to Jerusalem where they inquired about where they could find the child. King Herod, who was not a Jew, but an Idumaeon who married Miriam, a princess of the Hasmonean Dynasty, had no information for them, but he was alarmed at the thought that a child had been born who would replace him as king. He sent the men from the East to find the child so he could have him killed. They followed the star to a cave in the hills sloping down from the small village of Bethlehem. They believed the child was the Messiah foretold in the writings of the Israelites. ***They were men of faith.*** They paid homage to the child and presented him with gifts. Do we have the wisdom to believe that Jesus is our Savior.

Option 2

“Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage.”

St. Matthew tells of the Magi who made the long and difficult journey to Bethlehem to pay homage to a newborn Jewish child. Their visit is celebrated as the *Feast of the Epiphany*, also known as the *Manifestation of the Lord*. The Magi were astrologers from modern day Iraq or Iran. For us, the Epiphany is another opportunity to reflect on the true meaning of the Birth of Christ - God Incarnate - and how He is manifested in our lives. It is an opportunity to ponder whether, during Advent and the celebration of Christmas, we grew in our understanding and appreciation of God present among us? Have our efforts been equivalent to the arduous journey of the Magi to present gifts to the Child Jesus, particularly the gifts of our time, talents and resources to the mission of the Church through greater involvement in our parish faith community? Those gifts abound in our lives. Are we willing to share them with others? Are we willing to manifest Jesus [make Him present] to others?

January 13, 2019
The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord
Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

Option 1

“After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized . . .”

When Mary was pregnant she made the eighty mile trip from Nazareth to the town of Bethany to visit her elderly cousin Elizabeth, who was also pregnant. Mary greeted Elizabeth who reported that the child in her womb leaped for joy. Approximately thirty years later Mary's child Jesus made the same eighty mile journey to visit Elizabeth's child, John, called “The Baptist.” He was in the desert challenging people to “prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his path.” The two were aware of their separate roles in God's plan for the salvation of mankind. Jesus asked John to baptize him with water. John resisted, but Jesus insisted. John knew that Jesus would baptize those who followed him with “fire and the Spirit.” As Catholics we were baptized “In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” in the presence of the flame of the Paschal Candle lit from the New Fire at the Easter Vigil, and received the “flame of faith to be kept alive in our hearts.” Have we kept that flame of faith alive? Does it shine in our lives?

Option 2

“You are my beloved Son; with whom I am well pleased.”

St. Luke tells us of the baptism of Jesus by John in the River Jordan. This was an important event in the life of Jesus and the salvation history of mankind. The submission of Jesus to baptism by John with water as an act of repentance and reform was very significant to the men who wrote the Gospels many years after the Death and Resurrection of Jesus. The humility of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity to be baptized by the man who, by his own testimony, was “*A voice of one crying out in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths*” is an example for us. Are we humble like Jesus? Are we aware of our mission like John? Are we willing to repent for the times we have failed to accept our mission and acknowledge that everything we have and everything we ever will be is a gift from God that He wants us to use for our own benefit and the benefit of others? Can we be humble like Jesus, particularly in difficult times? Do we do our best to “prepare the way of the Lord?”

January 20, 2019
Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
John 2:1-11

Option 1

**Mary said, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her,
“Woman, how does your concern affect me?”**

A wedding feast in the time of Jesus lasted a week or more. Some guest traveled long distances on foot. They stayed several days to celebrate, recuperate, and prepare for their return home. The host provided food and wine during their stay, and for their return. When Mary told Jesus, “They have no wine” she was not only concerned about the embarrassment of the host, but for the welfare of the guest. Jesus was not unconcerned, but he was not ready to draw attention to himself. The love of his Mother moved him to action. Mary's faith in Jesus is revealed in her

instructions to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Mary’s last words recorded in Scripture are directed, not only the servants, but to all disciples of Jesus. She is speaking to us. The full implications of her words would not be known until the Last Supper when Jesus tells his disciples to “Love one another as I have loved you,” and then goes out to be crucified. If we are open to Jesus in prayer, doing whatever Jesus tells us can be unfamiliar, inconvenient, unpleasant, or risky. The apostles did what Jesus told them. Are we doing what Jesus tells us?

Option 2

“Do whatever he tells you!”

Mary is recorded as speaking only four times in all four Gospels [175 words]. First is her exchange with the angel at the Annunciation [Luke 1:34, 38]; next, when she visits Elizabeth and proclaims the *Magnificat* [Luke 1:46-55]; then when she confronts and chastises Jesus for staying behind in Jerusalem [Luke 2:48]. Mary’s last words in the Bible are at the wedding feast at Cana. She tells Jesus “*They have no more wine*” and then instructs the servants, “*Do whatever he tells you!*” [John 3:4]. Mary is a woman of few words, but they are powerful. From “*May it be done unto me according to your word*” to “*Do whatever he tells you!*” she gives us a model of faith, courage and openness to the will of God. She challenges us to listen to Jesus in prayer and to “do whatever he tells you.” to become all that God created us to be. What is that “woman of a few words” telling us today? Probably: “**Do whatever he tells you!**”

January 27, 2019

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

Option 1

“I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus.”

Many scholarly treatises have been speculated about the identity of “Theophilus” the person to whom St. Luke addresses his Gospel. The Greek name means “Friend of God.” Was Theophilus a friend of St. Luke, a powerful government official, or a pagan seeking to know more about Jesus? Was St. Luke addressing his record of the life and teachings of Jesus to every person who seeks to be a friend of God? Is it possible that St. Luke was cleverly saying “God is a Friend of all of us?” Or was Theophilus all of the above? Does it really matter. Whoever Theophilus was to St. Luke, we are all friends of God and God is our Friend. It was our Friend God who gave Isaiah the Word that a messiah would come to save us. It was that Word of our Friend God that Jesus read in the synagogue in his home town of Nazareth and announced that the Word had been fulfilled in their midst. The people of Nazareth rejected the Word of our Friend God; they rejected Jesus. Do we accept the Word of our Friend God? Do we accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord; as the Messiah? Do we believe the Word became Flesh and dwelt amongst us?

Option 2

“Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”

The question of when Jesus knew he was the Messiah has been debated since not long after he died and rose from the dead. In the beginning of his Gospel that St. Luke addresses to “most excellent Theophilus” [in Greek “*friend of God*”] he tells of Jesus standing up in the synagogue

in His home town of Nazareth to read a passage from the Book of Isaiah that prophesies the coming of the Messiah. He rolls up the scroll and announces that *“this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”* The people who had known Jesus from His youth, and knew Joseph and Mary even before Jesus was born, responded with questions and then anger. But we have the benefit of Scripture in the New Testament and the witness of more than two thousands years of people who believed in Jesus as Messiah and Lord. We are challenged to demonstrate our belief in Jesus by getting to know him better, appreciating His love for us and imitating Him to the best of our ability for ourselves and others. We are challenged to be a *“friend of Christ.”*

January 31, 2016
Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 4:21-30

Option 1

And Jesus said, “Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place.”

If we become a star athlete or acquire great wealth our high school or home town may honor us as “Person of the Year” or dedicate a plaque to us. But if we challenge people to do great things, there may be no plaque for us. Jesus entered the synagogue in his home town of Nazareth and read a passage from Isaiah that prophesied the coming of the Messiah and then He said it had been fulfilled in their midst. The people of Nazareth knew Jesus well. He grew up and lived among them. He was one of them. He was like them. He had not yet done anything to indicate that He was the Messiah. But the people knew the Messiah would do great things. If Jesus was the Messiah, there was no reason why they, too, could not do great things. If Jesus could not prove to them that He was the Messiah, there would be no pressure on them to be better than they wanted to be. Jesus knew that familiarity breeds doubt. He challenged the people of Nazareth to accept Him despite their doubt - to have faith in Him. Do we sometimes doubt Jesus? Do we accept Him as Messiah despite our doubt? Do we have faith in Him?

Option 2

“Isn’t this the son of Joseph?”

In his home town of Nazareth Jesus read a passage from Isaiah that prophesied the coming of the Messiah. He closed the scroll and claimed it had been fulfilled in their hearing. They “all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.” But they instinctively realized that if Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph, the carpenter, was truly the Messiah, he was destined to do great things. And, if he did great things he might challenge them to do great things. He had grown up among them and was like them. They became fearful and agitated and tried to throw him off of a high cliff at the top of the craggy hill where Nazareth is located. From our youth we have learned about Jesus through the revealed Word of God. We have come to know him as the Messiah who did great things and who saved us by his death and resurrection. We know he expects us to be all that God created us to be. How do we respond? Do we try to throw Jesus over a high cliff? Or do we try to imitate Jesus and do great things?