

# 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(s) who produces the bulletin.**

## Bulletin Bites

January 5, 2020

The Epiphany of the Lord

Matthew 2:1-12

### Option 1

**“They prostrated themselves and did him homage.”**

Miriam/Webster defines *Epiphany* as “a Christian festival held on January 6 in honor of the coming of the three kings to the infant Jesus Christ” and “A moment in which you suddenly see or understand something in a new or very clear way.” For Christians it is both. The three astrologers made a difficult journey from a foreign land to Bethlehem to visit a child because they saw a sign of his birth that helped them to “suddenly see or understand something in a new or very clear way.” It is unlikely the “Magi” understood the full implications of the birth of Jesus, but they obviously believed he represented hope for a chaotic and cruel world. Is it not ironic that modern day Christmas has become more of an orgy of parties and a frenzy buying and giving presents than a time to reflect on and appreciate that **Jesus is the Reason for the Season**. Do we make time to **prostrate ourselves and do him homage** and to **see or understand Him in a new or very clear way**. If not, there is still time to make the time.

### Option 2

**“Where is the newborn king of the Jews?”**

**We saw his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage.”**

The *Feast of the Epiphany* originated in the Eastern Church and eventually celebrated in the Roman Rite as the *Manifestation of the Lord* to astrologers from Persia (present day Iran). The magi made the long and difficult journey to Bethlehem to pay homage to a newborn Jewish child. For us it 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: Did we grow in our understanding and appreciation of *Emmanuel* [God is with us]. Have we made an effort equivalent to the Magi to present a gift to the Child Jesus - a gift of our time and a commitment to contribute more of our talents and resources to the mission of the Church and greater involvement in our parish faith community? No? Happily, it is not too late. Those gifts abound in our lives. Are we willing to share them with others and manifest Jesus to others?

**January 12, 2020**  
**The Baptism of the Lord**  
**Matthew 3:13-17**

**Option 1**

**“Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.”**

For pilgrims today the journey from Galilee to the southern end of the Jordan River where John baptized Jesus is a ninety minute+ ride in a comfortable, air conditioned bus. In the time of Jesus it was a four or five day walk through valleys and over hills in less than hospitable territory. John protest that he should be baptized by Jesus. Jesus responds to “allow it for now to fulfill all righteousness.” John demonstrates his confident awareness of who Jesus is and what he has come to accomplish. He baptizes Jesus so that what was written and prophesied in the Old Testament might be fulfilled by Jesus and those who believe in him. The same Jesus who came to John comes to us every day - in the people and events we encounter, in the challenges of our life, in our joys and sadness, in our successes and failures. He submits himself to us to help us discern God’s will for us and to lead us, by his example, to respond as God desires. When we do that we can know that God is saying, “This is my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased.”

**Option 2**

**“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”**

A voice from heaven spoke those words after Jesus convinced John to baptize him in the Jordan River. We would all be thrilled to hear a voice from heaven say about us, “This is my beloved child, with whom I am well pleased.” Well, we may not be standing in the Jordan River with John the Baptist pouring water over us, but we, as baptized Catholics, are “children of God.” To the extent that we are doing our best to be all that God created us to be and to identify, develop and use all of the talents, abilities and gifts that God has given to us for ourselves and for others, we can be sure that God is well pleased with us. And, if we are good stewards of our prayer life and truly listen for God’s will for us, we may not hear His voice with our ears, but we will know of His love with our hearts. And that should make us well pleased.

**January 19, 2020**  
**Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**John 1:29-34**

**Option 1**

**“I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and remain on him.”**

A dove is a popular image in Christianity to depict the Holy Spirit. But note that John did not say, “I saw a dove . . .” He said “I saw the Spirit . . .” A “spirit” is not visible to the human eye. It is discernable in the human heart and mind. John was aware that the Spirit of God was in Jesus. That Spirit did not come on Jesus and then depart. It remained. John called people to “repent” and baptized them with water as a sign they had been washed clean and could reform their lives. He knew that Jesus would baptize them, and us, with the Spirit that is in Him - the Spirit that would call and empower us to go beyond repentance and reform to seek the greatest good [the “magis”] that God desires and intends for us to achieve for ourselves and for others. The “magis” does not necessarily mean easy and pleasant. For Jesus, in whom the “Spirit

remained” it involved torture and crucifixion. For us it will at least involve challenges and difficult choices. But if we allow the Spirit to be in us, we will achieve our “magis.”

### **Option 2**

#### **“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”**

Note that John says “*sin* of the world” and not “*sins* of the world.” We all have free will and are capable of committing individual sins for which we must account and seek forgiveness. But what is the *sin* of the world? John observed a self-centeredness in the people of his day that is the opposite of being centered on God. John understood that such self-centeredness is at the heart of all sin in the world and recognized Jesus as the Lamb of God, the person who would sacrifice himself to help us root out self-centeredness and become centered on God. Jesus did that with his life and his teaching. But he needs our help. Because God has given us the great gift of free will we must choose to stop being centered on ourselves and choose to put God at the center of our lives. When we are centered on God we become a *person for others*. If everyone in the world becomes a *person for others* would there be any *sin of the world*?

**January 26, 2020**

**Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Matthew 4:12-23**

### **Option 1**

#### **“Come after me and I will make you fishers of men.”**

The *Deadliest Catch* is a popular “reality” program. It features the men who fish for crabs in the frigid waters of the Bering Sea. The rough seas, cold weather and heavy equipment can be dangerous, and sometimes deadly. Fishing on the Sea of Galilee may not be as deadly but it was difficult and demanding. It may be understandable that when Jesus called Simon (called Peter), Andrew, James and John to leave their nets and become “fishers of men” they jumped at the chance. But they actually did not give up one to accept the other. They continued their livelihood of fishing the sea as they followed Jesus and learned from his words and example how to lead others to a greater awareness of the love of a great and generous God - to be “fishers of men.” Through his call to Peter and the others Jesus calls us to learn from him to use all of the talents, abilities and gifts God has given us to be “fishers of men” - to lead others to Him. In many ways that can be more challenging than fishing for crabs in the Bering Sea.

### **Option 2**

#### **“Come after me and I will make you fishers of men.”**

Brothers, Simon and Andrew, presumably like their father and many generations before them, were fisherman on the deep and sometimes treacherous Sea of Galilee. They tended their nets, repaired their boats, went out on the waters day and night in hope of finding fish to fill their nets. If they were fortunate to make a catch they had to manually haul in their nets, row to shore, dock their boats, sort their catch, bring them to market, and do it all over again as soon as possible. It was a tough life and they were rugged people. Jesus calls them to become fishers of men. Mark tells us they abandoned their nets and followed Jesus. They probably continued fishing to earn a livelihood, but they did follow Jesus to learn from his teaching and carry on his mission. They eventually learn that fishing for men is at least as difficult and dangerous as fishing for fish, if not

more so. Through Simon, called Peter, and Andrew, Jesus is calling us to fishers of others by imitating him and being a person for others. Are we willing to follow Jesus?

### **Option 3**

#### **Jesus walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John.**

Fishing is difficult work and can be very dangerous. Fishermen are a hearty group and tend to be very independent, but they are quick to come to the aid of someone in danger and are generous to people in need. Simon and his brother Andrew were partners with Zebedee and his sons James and John in the fishing trade they operated out of the small village of Capernaum on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. When Jesus challenged them to “Come after me and I will make you fishers of men” they may have thought, “Gee, that has to be easier than fishing for fish.” Little did they know that the truth Jesus would reveal to them through his life and teachings would lead them into a life that was more difficult and dangerous than catching fish from the sea. By leaving their nets and becoming imitators of Jesus they challenge us to do likewise, to become *fishers of men*. Are we up to the challenge?