

## Father Dave's Homily

### 01/06/13 ..... Epiphany

- The feast of the Epiphany brings to our mind exotic men riding camels, coming from far-off lands. These Magi recognize Jesus as a newborn king, even though he is born in a modest, indeed, poor way.
- Today these men complete the Nativity scene in Church (though they would have arrived long after the shepherds, and by that time the family would have been in a house).
- They are symbolic of the new chosen people; they are not a part of the Jewish nation. They are the Gentiles whom St. Paul calls coheirs to God's promises, members of that same body of Christ.
- Nearly all of us are a part of that Gentile people. It's appropriate that our parish celebrates its feast day today, having received a name traditionally assigned to one of those Magi.
- The unique name of St. Caspar (none other in the USA) challenges us as a parish to reach out to new people, to strangers, to those different than ourselves.
- Yes, the glorious recognition of Jesus Christ by the nations is one aspect of this feast. But there is another aspect, with a somewhat darker side. That is the fear and rejection received by our Savior by those among his people who should recognize him.
- That fear and rejection is personified in King Herod the Great, though he's not the only one troubled by the mention of a new "King of the Jews." Matthew remarks that "all Jerusalem" was troubled as well.
- And why was he troubled? In a nutshell, he saw a threat to his power. When people are in power, their very first instinct is to preserve that power, often at all costs.
- Herod was an extreme example of that. Jewish historians like Josephus testify to his cruelty. But he is by no means unique.

-- Anyone who followed the debate over the so-called fiscal cliff heard of how some members of Congress were afraid to approve a deal because they would be threatened to be bumped out of power in next year's primaries. That happened on both sides of the aisle.

-- It's often tough to do what's right when doing what's right may threaten your hold on power. Herod was all too aware of that.

-- Lest we mock him too boldly, we should be honest about how we resist change that may threaten our place at the table or our share of power, however small that might be. We have our fears as well.

-- This dynamic can occur in parish committees and ministries just as easily as it can in the halls of Congress. Often we say we want new people, but if they have new or different ideas, then they are a threat.

-- Herod already saw Jesus as a threat when he was a mere baby. Other Jewish authorities would see him as a threat once he grew up. Though he didn't advocate an overthrow of the Law of Moses, his message scared many people.

-- And his power to heal and teach threatened them even more. In the end, they would bring him to trial and crucify him. But, of course, that was not the end of the story.

-- Epiphany is not just a time to admire the infant Jesus. It is a time to be open to God's movement in the world. It is a call to move beyond a comfortable existence where there is a place for everything and everything has its place. It's a time to put aside our fears.

-- It calls us to allow God to work in new ways in our lives and in the lives of others. It asks us to be open to new people and new ways of spreading the gospel message.

-- As members of St. Caspar Church, with a name symbolic of new and different nations, may we open ourselves to the new ways God can work among us in 2013 and beyond.