

01/04/15 Epiphany

-- Today we recall a journey, a journey born of hope. The people who made this journey came from a far-off land. They were not a part of the chosen people. But they had heard of a great king in this small province called Judea, a newborn child. They were seeking him using the stars as a guide.

-- Somehow, God had touched their lives. And it was like an itch they had to scratch until it was resolved. Though they were men of means, they were not put off by the simple circumstances in which they found this child. They gave him their gifts and proper homage, and then disappeared into history, never to be heard of again.

-- Traditions about them developed, however. They were given names. One of those names, Caspar, was given centuries later, to a Church established in NW Ohio in the 19th century as a mission. It finally became a parish in 1919. It is the only one bearing this name in the United States.

-- Fifty years ago, the parishioners of our community decided they needed to build a new, larger Church for their growing parish. It was a journey with risks: could they do it and pay for it, would the change in location affect the community. There were many open questions.

-- But they were a people of hope. They persevered, and at the end of that year they had a new Church building. We will be celebrating that at the end of this year with a pastor whose own father played a part in that building project.

-- What is more significant than the beautiful building, though, is the faith of those people. A few are still here, though many have passed on. Like the magi they came, expressed and shared their faith, and moved on.

-- As we celebrate this patronal feast of our parish, we remember these people. But we also ask our God that the faith they showed might continue to be evident in our present parish community.

-- We have a choice. We can be like Herod, suspicious of anyone or anything which threatens our security or challenges us to change the way we think.

-- Or we can be like the Magi. They were open to the working of God in new ways. They came from a different land and culture, but they sensed God's presence in this newborn baby from a small province hundreds of miles west of where they came from.

-- Today we pray for all who seek God genuinely. We pray for our Christian brothers and sisters in the lands where the Magi originally came from. Many of them face severe persecution for their faith.

-- We pray for people of faith who are seeking a better life by moving to a new land. May they be given a chance to make a good life for their families.

-- And we pray for those who follow Christ around us, especially in our parish community. May we who are named after one of the traditional names given to the Magi reflect their faith, hope and love.

-- May we be open to God's presence around us, especially in the new ways that presence may be manifest. For God has chosen us as his people in the early 21st century.

-- May we answer his call generously, with great hope in our hearts.